This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

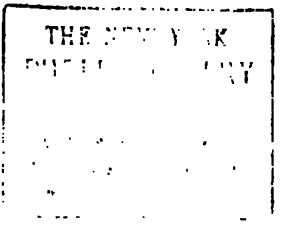
Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

3 3433 07486911 0

Joseph Tuckerman.

NCW

Fiction, English
-Huguenots -Fic. Cri


THE NEW YORK

THE MAN AT ARMS;

OR,

HENRI DE CERONS;

A ROMANCE.

BY G. P. R. JAMES, ESQ.

AUTHOR OF

"DARNLEY," "DE L'ORME," "CHARLES TYRRELL,"

&c. &c.

THIRD EDITION.

LONDON:

RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.

1844.

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY
920055A
ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS

LONDON:

PRINTED BY R. CLAY, BREAD STREET HILL.

HENRI DE CERONS.

CHAPTER I.

It is difficult to discover what are the exact sources from which spring the thrilling feelings of joy and satisfaction with which we look back to the days of our early youth, and to the scenes in which our infancy was passed. It matters not, or at least very little, what are the pleasures which we have enjoyed in after years, what are the delights that surround us, what are the blessings which Heaven has cast upon our lot. Whenever the mind, either as a voluntary act, or from accidental associations, recalls, by the aid of memory, the period of childhood and the things which surround it, there comes over us a gladdening sensation of pure and simple joys which we never taste again at any time of life. It must be, at least in part, that the delights of those days were framed in innocence and ignorance of evil; and that He who declared that of such as little children consisted the kingdom of Heaven, has allotted to the babes of this world, in the brightness of their innocence, joys similar to those of the world beyond, joys that never cloy, and that leave no regret. What though some mortal tears will mix with those delights, what *though the flesh must* suffer, and the evil one will

tempt; yet the allotted pleasures have a zest which not even novelty alone could give, and an imperishable purity in their nature which makes their remembrance sweeter than the fruition of other joys, and speaks their origin from Heaven.

I love to dwell upon such memories, and to find likenesses for them in the course, the aspect, and the productions of the earth itself. I see the same sweetness and the same simplicity pervading the youth of all nature, and find in the dim violet, the youngest child of Spring, an image of those early joys—pure, soft, and calm, and full of an odour that acts upon the sense more than that of any other flower.

Thus it is, I suppose, and for these causes, that in looking back upon the days of my youth—though those days were not as happy and as bright as they are to many people—I feel a secret satisfaction, which I knew not at the time. Yet those hours, indeed, as one who gives a diamond to a child, bestowed upon me a gift, the value of which I knew not till many a year had passed away.

My first recollections refer to the period when I was about seven or eight years old, and to a sweet spot in the far south of France, called Blancford, not far from the great city of Bordeaux. The château in which I dwelt had belonged for ages to my ancestors; and the little room in one of the turrets which was assigned to me, looked towards the setting sun, over manifold beautiful green slopes and wooded banks, with now and then a broken bit of yellow ground, that harmonised beautifully and richly with the warm tints of the spring and the autumn, and broke not less pleasantly the thick green of the mid year. Upon these banks and trees and slopes the sunshine seemed to dwell with peculiar fondness, and thither came the bright and smiling showers of spring and the rich vision-like light and shades of *autumn*. Gay hawking-parties, and many a splendid *cavalcade* from the wealthy and important town in the

neighbourhood, diversified the scenery during the bright part of the year, and towards the winter time the beasts of the forest and the field used to change their more distant dwelling for the neighbouring woods, and afford sport and diversion to the inhabitants of the castle.

As I have said, that château had been for centuries the abode of my ancestors, ever since the arm of Du Guesclin and the wisdom of Charles had expelled the English from the shores of France; but still that château was not mine, nor ever likely to be mine, for I was at that time a poor dependent upon the bounty of others; without wealth, rank, station, or fortune of any kind, to give hope to my heart or energy to my efforts.

The lord of that castle, my father's first cousin, had taken me out of compassion for his relation, a poor soldier of fortune, who married thoughtlessly and died young; and as he—himself a lover of pleasure, and even of licence—at the time he took me into his house, thought only of marriage as a remote evil, he treated me at first with so much kindness that the foolish persons who surrounded us imagined that a time might come when I should be his heir. Nothing, indeed, was further from his thoughts: he had always determined, and still held the resolution of wedding ultimately, in the hope of seeing his possessions descend to children of his own. The accomplishment of this purpose was hastened by accidental circumstances, which placed it in his power to marry a beautiful and wealthy bride, whom he brought home to the château in great pomp, and the festivities which followed her arrival are among the first events which I distinctly remember.

Surrounded by friends, and with scarcely a wish ungratified, my cousin might well consider himself a rich and happy man in the possession of one so fair as she was. But beauty was not the only quality which she brought to make him happy; nor riches the only dowry that was settled upon her head. Never did I see any *one who combined* more graces of person with more fine

qualities of the heart, never any one who more merited the love of every one that approached her.

It was evident that she had heard of me before she came, and she greeted me with a warm and kindly smile, which went direct to my heart. She gazed upon me at the same time with a look of deep interest and scrutinizing inquiry, as if she thought to read my character in my face, or to divine what were the feelings with which I met her. Heaven knows that I had no feelings but those of sincere joy: I entertained not the slightest idea that her coming could have any evil effect upon my fate, that it would in the least change my destiny or affect my happiness. I was utterly ignorant of such things at that period; the joy that was around me found a ready echo in a heart naturally joyous, and I laughed and danced and sung with the rest, more unthinking of the morrow than the bird upon the wing.

If the fair lady of Blancford gazed at me when first she came, my cousin's eyes rested upon me many a time when he saw me so gay and happy. I know not what it was, but it seemed as if my happiness displeased him.

I have since learned to know that in the human heart there is often a great difference between remorse and repentance; and that when we have done a fellow-creature wrong, when we have pained, injured, aggrieved—ay, even when we only entertain the purpose of doing so—we hate that being on account of the very acts for which we should hate ourselves.

I do not mean to say that my cousin had injured me by his marriage; for surely he had every right to wed where and when he thought fit; but I am inclined to believe, from facts which I heard afterwards, that the first germ of harsh and unkind feeling towards me was produced by a conviction that he had treated me with greater kindness and distinction than he afterwards *intended to* keep up, and that it was his duty to make a *provision for* me against which his inclination struggled.

There were other matters, of which I may have to speak hereafter, which increased and perpetuated such feelings. He could not but recollect, however, that before the death of my father he had been liberal of promises and generous in words. He had said that he would breed me up for a soldier, and that he would take care I should have the means of advancing myself; and now, perhaps, his intentions were changed. If they were not then, they certainly became so after a short time.

My cousin was at that period a gay and gallant man, of about five or six and thirty years of age, handsome in appearance, specious in manners and words, with no traces of profligate life in his language or appearance, and very well fitted to gain and keep the love of any young heart not thoroughly versed in the ways of mankind. Although his marriage, as most marriages are, had been arranged entirely by the relations of the lady, without any reference to her wishes; yet there is no doubt that she married him with a heart free from other attachments, and even prepossessed in his favour.

From such feelings, of course, affection readily sprang up; and, had he merited it, love, deep, devoted, heartfelt, unchanging love would indubitably have followed. But, alas! he did not deserve it, he took not the means to obtain it; and though the attachment remained, that attachment was mingled with sadness, and perhaps with bitterness; and grave melancholy trod fast upon the steps of feasting and merriment.

For my own part, I was of a cheerful and happy disposition, a little fanciful, perhaps, and somewhat wild, occasionally fond of solitary wandering and deep thought, but at other periods light and gay as a butterfly. Thus, then, I felt not—scarcely perceived, indeed—that the demeanour of the general servants and retainers of my cousin's house was at all changed towards me, although it *was changed* from the very first day of his *marriage. But had it* been changed ten times as much,

had they treated me with neglect, or scorn, or contemptible malice, the pain would have been more than compensated by the love and tenderness of that sweet lady whom he wedded, and by the constant care she showed me.

She first it was who recollected that, born of noble race, and connected with many of the great and proud in the land, it was needful that I should have the common education and accomplishments of the day; and she argued, that, if I were poor and penniless, as her husband said, and required to make a name and fortune for myself, it was but the more necessary that, by the cultivation of my mind, even in an extraordinary degree, I should be provided with the means of accomplishing the more difficult task that was allotted to me.

My strength of body, and an eager, active spirit, had already rendered me familiar with manly exercises in a far greater degree than most youths of my age could boast of; but my mind was totally uncultivated. I could ride wild horses that many a man could not manage; I could fence as well as my strength allowed me; and my aim with the arquebus was true and firm; I know not the time when I could not swim, and my cousin's pages, though considerably older than myself, were unable to compete with me in leaping or pitching the bar; but I could neither write nor read, and knew nothing of books or of the world, but by occasional words which I had heard spoken, and treasured up in my memory.

No sooner did my cousin's wife find that this was the case, than she herself became my instructress; and, oh, how kindly did she teach me, day after day, with unwearied patience, her fingers playing with the curls of my hair, and her eyes often bent thoughtfully upon me, as if she were calculating, with some melancholy, my future destiny—and her own.

Perhaps I was stupid, perhaps I was by nature inattentive; but the love, the deep love, that I felt towards her made me exert every energy of my mind to give her

pleasure and to make her task easy; and though the undertaking must have been dull, and my progress slow at first, yet she always seemed well satisfied, and lured me on with words of bright encouragement.

A time soon came, however, when her instructions became somewhat painful, apparently; there was a languor in her eyes and in her tone which seemed to me strange; and, without being told to do so, I spoke in a lower tone of voice, I paid more attention to everything she said, I avoided all that could disturb or trouble her. It seemed to me that she was ill, and nature taught me to spare her all exertion.

At length, one day, she said to me, "I must give over teaching you for a time, Henri, but good Monsieur la Tour will take the task till I can follow it again;" and she put me under the charge of the minister of our little village, or rather, indeed, I may call him the chaplain of the château. He was a good man as ever lived, who had always shown himself fond of me, and who now followed up with zeal and kindness, that which she had so kindly and generously begun.

The whole family, and every one in the immediate neighbourhood, were, as is well known, of the reformed religion, and my cousin, the Baron de Blancford, was at that time absent with the protestant army. Shortly after, however, he returned; sent for, I believe, to be present at the birth of his first child, and great anxiety manifested itself in the household for several days. Fears were entertained for the safety of the lady; but at length I heard that the Baroness had given birth to a child, and that she herself was proceeding favourably. With my heart full of joy and satisfaction, I ran to congratulate my cousin, thinking that there could be nothing but similar feelings in his own heart. He pushed me angrily away from him, however, exclaiming, "You fool, it is only a girl."

Not understanding what he meant, or comprehending in the *slightest degree* why the birth of a girl should

give him less satisfaction than if a son had been born, I ran to the rooms of Monsieur la Tour and told him what had happened; and then it was for the first time that I was made to understand how great was the difference made by the customs of the world, between two classes of beings naturally equal. A vague idea, too, of my own circumstances was also communicated to my mind; and from that time, the change which had taken place, and which daily increased in the deportment of my cousin's servants towards me, was marked, understood, and felt painfully.

Two days after the birth of his daughter, the Baron again left the château; but he remained long enough to make me feel most bitterly that I was no longer the boy whom he had sported with and loved in former years.

The lady soon recovered, and resumed her care of me without a change. She loved to have me with her; she loved to see me play with her infant; and, as month after month proceeded, the child's affection for me grew strong, and more strong, till there was none but her mother that she loved so well.

About a year and a-half afterwards a son was born, and then another; and from the birth of the first I found that I was no longer an object of consideration to any one, except to the good clergyman, whose affection towards me seemed to increase as that of the others diminished, and to the sweet lady, who never for a moment, in her love and care for others, forgot her love and care for me.

A change had come over the whole household of my cousin, however. The lover had long been forgotten in the husband; the husband had now been forgotten in the man of pleasure. Whenever any short cessation of hostilities permitted him to visit the capital, it was in Paris that the Lord of Blancford's time was wholly spent; and at other periods his days were generally passed in the pleasures of other great towns, afar from

the family which required his care and direction, and from the wife whose love he had cast away.

On her part she showed not the slightest inclination to depart from his expressed wish that she would remain at the château of Blancford. She loved not great cities; she sought not to indemnify herself for her husband's neglect, by following the same evil course in which he led the way; she enjoyed fully and entirely the pleasures of rural life, and found in the duties of a mother the greatest consolation and delight. Once in the course of the month, perhaps, she visited Bordeaux with the state becoming her rank and station, called upon some of the chief ladies of the city, and returned home after having remained there but a few hours. Very frequently on these occasions I accompanied her, and the kindness with which she mentioned me to all who were really good and estimable, seemed to bespeak for me their future protection and regard, although she never even hinted at such an object.

I was her companion almost always in her walks, too, and from her conversation I daily gained information upon subjects with which otherwise, most probably, I should never have been acquainted; for she took a delight in forming and enlarging my mind; and while she endeavoured to instil principles, even more than knowledge, she illustrated for me the lessons she gave by facts and examples, which often drew her on to further explanations, and which certainly remained in my memory, storing it with much that was curious, interesting, and beautiful.

Indeed, there was scarcely a circumstance which ever happened to me in after life, which did not cause me to recollect something valuable in her instruction; something which might teach me to know the right from the wrong, to choose the good from the bad, or to return from the evil, when I had been led into wrong, by the shortest and most expeditious way.

In short, though she often fell into fits of musing,

when we were out together, she seldom lost an opportunity of giving my mind improvement. If I fixed upon a wild flower, she told me its nature and its qualities; if I watched a passing cloud, she explained to me how sweet and beneficial to the earth's surface are the light vapours that float gently over it, descending in light rain to render everything fertile and productive; and she would teach me, as well as she could, what were the beneficial effects produced by the winds and storms, which seemed to my imagination only destructive—pointing still to the all-powerful hand of Providence shaping the events of this world with never-erring wisdom, directing all with never-failing might.

From her conversation, from her train of thought, my mind took the peculiar turn which it ever after retained; and even to the present day—after scenes of peril and danger, and activity; after having gained by sad experience knowledge of the world, and become hackneyed and keen in the cunning of the earth—many of the words that she spoke to me, many of the counsels that she gave, come back upon my ear in all the fresh sweetness of the tones in which they were originally spoken; and I feel myself better, happier, more contented, when I thus dwell with her for a moment in the wide tracts of memory, than I do when fulfilling any of the ordinary duties of my state and station.

What the lady herself could not do to improve my mind the good priest did: he applied himself to teach me sciences, to read other languages than my own, both dead and living; to argue by rule, to write my native tongue with accuracy, to calculate arithmetically, and to do all, in short, that he himself could do, which was more, perhaps, than my after-fate required.

It was some years, of course, ere I gained much facility in anything; but ere four years had passed after my cousin's marriage, I had become quite a different *being*. The formidable obstacles that await us at the *entrance of* every science had given way; and during

the following year, which was the fourteenth of my age, I made greater progress than I had done in any other. I had now acquired a taste for the poetry which has descended to us from other days; and from that high and ennobling source I drank long, deep draughts of pure and unmingled delight. I found, too, that there were works of infinite value, full of fancy and of wit, full of instruction and amusement, in other languages besides either French, or Greek, or Latin; and, almost unaided, for my good preceptor knew little of that tongue himself, I made myself a tolerable master of the Italian language, and felt like one who had suddenly discovered a treasure, when the old works of Dante and Boccaccio, and the newer poems of Tasso, fell into my hands.

Nevertheless, I did not in any degree neglect the usual exercises of which I had formerly been fond. There were always a number of old military retainers about the house, who were willing and eager to teach me everything that could be taught in the profession to which they had devoted themselves. I did not, it is true, follow any study with great regularity, but I followed all and each with eagerness, zeal, and devotion.

When the Baroness could give me any of her time, she was always the first I sought, and next to her the good minister, La Tour. But he had many duties to perform, and during the part of the day when I could find neither of those friends, I followed with eagerness every sport of the field that was going on. Every instruction I could get in military exercises I sought continually, and listened with deep and profound attention both to all that the old officers or soldiers could tell me of discipline and of tactics, and to their tales of terrible sieges, well-fought fields, and marvellous escapes. I was one of the best of auditors, and, flattered by the attention that I paid them, they were always willing to amuse or to instruct me. The court-yard of the castle became *the mimic field* of battle: the walls, the cisterns,

the stable, were the fortifications of a besieged city; and everything that was at hand was pressed into our service, either as the animate or inanimate materials of war. All the tales they told were delightful to me, but more especially so were those in which my father's name was introduced, and in which I always heard deep regrets expressed for his early death, and praises of the prowess and skill which he had displayed as a soldier and a commander.

In the mean while the greater part of the servants and retainers of the household treated me merely as the poor dependent: the little services I required were neglected; any direction that I gave was heard in silence, or replied to with contemptuous lightness; and, in order to keep myself from the irritation of petty insolence, I was obliged to avoid all communication, as far as possible, with the domestics of the château.

In the presence of their mistress, indeed, the servants dared not behave in such a manner, and when her eye was on them they showed me every sort of reverence and respect; once, also, I remember her rebuking one of the grooms for neglecting my horse, speaking to him in a manner so severe as to work a permanent change in his conduct, and in some degree to affect his companions.

These slight inconveniences, however, did not in the least depress my spirit or keep down my gaiety. Youth's buoyant and happy blood beat in every limb, my heart was light, my cheerfulness unchecked; and, though I learned when any one neglected me to punish by a cutting word, yet it was always done with light and happy gaiety, and forgotten almost as soon as it was spoken, at least by myself.

Thus years rolled on, and during the frequent and long-continued absence of my cousin, his children learned to love me with a strong affection; and taking a model from the domestic circle of a neighbouring family, my imagination pictured for me a future fate, like that of *a person* whom I frequently beheld situated in very

similar circumstances. He was at this time a man well advanced in life, and, like me, the cousin of the lord of the castle; but he had gained considerable renown in arms. The father of the family, who was now withheld from active service by the effects of severe wounds, confided to him the leading of his retainers, the children clung to him with reverence and affection, and the two eldest were, even at that very time, trying their first arms under the sword of their veteran cousin. He possessed no property, he sought none; but he lived with people who reverenced and loved him; he had his own honoured seat by the hall fire, his tales were listened to and sought for with delight by all, and his counsel or assistance was asked by the father, when any matter of real danger or difficulty arose, by the elder sons in the mysteries of the chase or the mew, and by the younger children in any of the small sorrows or difficulties which were to them as important as wars or sieges.

I fancied myself, I say, like him: winning renown in arms, gaining a station by my own deeds, and seeing the young beings that I loved so tenderly as babes, grow up round me as round an elder brother.

But oh, how vainly, how youthfully did I calculate! My cousin, when he returned to the castle after any of his long absences, had now become harsh and stern. Me he treated with utter neglect and coldness; he saw me dine at his table without addressing a word to me; he met me without any kind gratulation; he heard me wish him joy of his return with scarcely an answering word. When he looked at me, it was coldly; and I could not but feel that I was a burthen to him.

When I was about fifteen years of age, he one morning took the pains to ask what progress I had made in my studies. The question was addressed to Monsieur La Tour, but in my presence. The clergyman replied with high praise, higher, I believe, than I deserved; and the Baron's reply was, "Don't you think you can contrive to make a *priest of him*, La Tour?"

My blood boiled, I confess; but my cousin turned away without waiting for any reply, having satisfied himself that, by the question he had asked and the suggestion he had made, he quite fulfilled his duty towards me, at least for the time.

I thought, however, of the days when I had sat upon his knee, and when he had said that he would make a little hero of me; that I should be a Bayard or a Du Guesclin.

He was absent after that visit for more than two years; and there were tales reached the château of some fair dame in the capital who withheld the Baron from his wife, his children, and his duties, and kept him in bonds stronger than the green withies of Delilah.

The health of the Baroness had for some time been declining; she had now been married ten years; and of that period she had known a few months, perhaps, of visionary happiness, two or three years of calm unmurmuring tranquillity, and six or seven of anguish and sorrow. Her little girl, Louise, was now nine years of age, the image of her mother in everything,—features, complexion, disposition; there was the difference of course between the woman and the child, but still there was the same small taper hand, the same beautiful foot, the same brilliant complexion, the same clear, open forehead, the same thoughtful but ingenuous smile. She was with her mother constantly or with me, and it was she who even at that age first discovered the progress of illness in the being she best loved, and pointed out to me the flushed cheek, the bright and glittering eye, the pale lips, and the features daily becoming sharp.

"Do you not think, Henri," she said to me, one day, "that Mamma looks ill?" And then she went on to say in what particular it appeared to her that it was so, showing that she had watched her mother's countenance in a way most strange for a child of her age.

When my attention was thus called to the subject, I *remarked the* change also; and I and Louise used to

watch with care and anxiety the progress of disease. We neither of us knew, we neither of us fully comprehended, to what it all tended. It was not exactly fear that we entertained, but it was grief; we grieved to see her suffer, we grieved to see the languor and weakness that crept over her frame.

At length the Baron returned; but his return contributed very little to the restoration of his wife's health. He brought with him many gay and riotous companions; the castle was filled with revelry and merriment; he was absent at the chase or in the city, during the greater part of each day, and the night went down in songs, and mirth, and drinking. He soon went away again to the capital; and his wife continued withering slowly, like a flower whose day of brightness is over.

Such was the course of events for some years, till I reached the age of twenty; when the health of the Baroness so completely and rapidly gave way, that messengers were sent off in all haste, to call her husband to the side of her death-bed. He came; and though he came unwillingly, yet he was evidently pained and struck at the sight of the ruin and decay which he now beheld. He was gloomy and sorrowful; and it might be some consolation to his dying wife to find, that when all was irrevocable, and neither tears nor regrets could recall the past, he mourned for the approaching loss of one whose worth he had not sufficiently estimated; and experienced feelings of affection towards her, which he had not known till it was too late.

The lady of Blancford died, and the grief of all, good and bad alike, followed her to the grave; for there was a sweetness, and a gentleness, and a kindness in her nature, which touched the heart even of the selfish and the vicious; and made them mourn for her, as soon as her virtues were no longer a living reproach to their errors.

At the time of her death, her daughter and eldest child was little more than twelve years old, the two

boys somewhat younger than eleven and ten; and well might the father, when he looked round upon their young faces, feel that his hearth was left desolate; well might he regret, in bitterness of heart, that he had not sufficiently valued the blessing he had possessed.

That he felt such sensations I am perfectly sure, but he felt them with a degree of sullenness as well as sorrow. Conscience lashed him; but he bore its chastisement with obdurate pride, and murmured not at the smart.

I did not see him for several days after the funeral of his wife; and, indeed, since his return he had taken scarcely any notice of me, seeming not even to see me. But soon after, I saw his eyes fix upon me, from time to time, with a dull and frowning aspect; and to bear such cold unkindness had by this time become a burthen to me, which I was resolved to cast off. The one whom of all others I had loved best from my early days, was now gone; and though I loved all her children, and especially Louise, who now clung to me as her only prop and stay in her overpowering grief for her mother, yet I felt that I could not endure any longer the proud coldness of my cousin, since the tie between him and me, which his wife's care and tenderness had afforded, was broken for ever.

"I have at least my father's sword," I thought; "with that he gained his living, and with it will I gain mine."

But there was much to be thought of, there was much to be done. "What course," I asked myself, "shall I choose?—what plans shall I pursue?" And much I meditated even these matters, but meditated always alone; for there was none whom I could consult, none in whom I could confide. To Monsieur la Tour, who loved me as his own son, I would not speak of the matter at all, for I knew that he would oppose my going; and my cousin himself, of course, I did not choose to consult; for the proud air of contempt with *which he* had long treated me, made me feel that his

advice would not be such as I could follow without pain; and any assistance that he offered, could only be an indignity to receive. I was utterly ignorant of the world, and of the world's ways; and though, perhaps, I was not deficient in natural acuteness, yet life was to me an unknown country, full of thick woods and tangled paths; without a map to show me the road, or a guide to direct my footsteps aright.

Although it was now the winter time, and the sere leaves had fallen from the trees, leaving the woods thin and naked, yet it was in the forest which came near to the château that I loved to take my way, and dream of my future projects.

An event, however, occurred one day, which deranged all these plans for the time, and suspended their execution for more than two years. I had gone out as usual on foot, and wandered a considerable way into the wood, when, suddenly, as I was walking up and down, gazing upon the icy bondage of the stream, and the feathery frost upon the rushes and other water-plants, I heard what seemed a loud, but distant cry of distress.

It struck me instantly that the voice was a familiar one; and crossing the stream, I rushed on like lightning, to the spot whence it seemed to proceed. There I found the eldest of my cousin's sons, Charles, a noble and high-spirited, but somewhat weakly boy, thrown down upon the ground by an immense wolf, whose fangs were fixed in his shoulder. The animal, it seems, had sprung at his throat, and knocked him down by the force of its attack; but even in falling, the boy, with noble presence of mind, had struck the animal with his dagger, and prevented it from taking the fatal grasp which it sought, and which certainly would have terminated his existence before I arrived.

A loud shout which I gave as I came up, to scare the beast as fast as possible from his prey, made the wolf instantly turn upon me with its peculiar, fierce, low howl. I had been accustomed, however, to hunt

such beasts in those woods for many years; and as he rushed upon me, I struck him a violent blow with my sword across the eyes, which almost blinded him, and dashed him down to my feet at once. But, mad with hunger and pain, the beast, even in falling, seized my leg in his fangs, and never let go his hold till he was quite dead. I killed and threw him off as quickly as possible; and then, running to my young cousin, carried him home to the castle without the pause of a moment, although the wound I had received in my leg was extremely painful, and the blood marked my track all the way to the gates.

The boy was but little hurt, and from his wound no serious consequence arose; mine also was of little importance, though it left me lame for several weeks. My cousin, however, on the following morning, thought fit to thank me for the service I had rendered his son; and at the same time he presented me with some trinkets and jewels, which he said his wife had requested might be given to me, as remembrances of her. There was much coldness and constraint in his manner while he spoke; and the purpose which I had entertained for some time now broke forth.

"My lord," I said, "I thank you for these things, which I shall always keep and value highly in memory of one from whom I have never received anything but benefits and kindness."

The Baron was turning away, but I added, "Stay, my lord; I have yet more to say. It is not often that I trouble you with words, and now shall not make them very lengthy."

The Baron turned round towards me with evident surprise at my tone and manner, and with some sternness, but without the slightest touch of scorn, demanding, "What is it you wish to say?"

"Merely this, sir," I replied; "I have been somewhat too long a burthen to you. I am now more than twenty *years of age*, and ought probably to have done before

what I intend to do now; namely, seek my own fortunes, and endeavour to provide for my own necessities without remaining dependent upon any one. I am perfectly competent, I believe, in every respect, to gain my bread as my father did his. I ask nothing of you in any shape; and only now seek to inform you that I will leave the château to-morrow, with many thanks for the shelter and bread you have afforded me."

I never in my life beheld the countenance of my cousin express so much surprise. I saw him waver for a moment, as if he were going to turn and leave me with contempt; but the grief he had lately suffered, the chastening sight of death, and the service which I had rendered to his son, gave to a better spirit than that which usually actuated him the predominance for a moment; and turning round, with a look both mournful and reproachful, he said,—

"No, Henri, no! do not leave the poor children now. If not for my sake, for their mother's memory stay with them still for a while. La Tour will also be with you and with them. But he is growing aged, his health is feeble, his life insecure: my own life, God knows when it may end; and while I am obliged to be absent, and before I have determined what to do with them, I would fain have some kindred blood near. On my return from Paris, which will not be very long, you shall be free to do as you please; and I will promote your views to the utmost of my power."

He spoke with a tone of command which I might have been inclined to resist, had there not been mingled with it a certain degree of confidence and kindness, the value of which was certainly enhanced not a little by its rarity. I made no reply: indeed I had not time; for taking it for granted that I acquiesced, he quitted me immediately.

A long conversation ensued between him and Monsieur La Tour, in which he arranged everything regarding the *maintenance of* his family during his absence,

and the proper regulation of the château. A portion of the rents were ordered to be paid to the pastor for the expenses of the house; and the worthy man promised never to quit the family for more than one day. My cousin spoke of me, too, I found; and, according to Monsieur La Tour's representation, spoke with some kindness. I am inclined to believe, however, that the minister's representations were the cause of his acting towards me ere he quitted the château, I may say more wisely, as well as more kindly, than he had previously done.

The regulation of all expenses was confided to the clergyman: he received and he paid for everything. But a portion, though a small one, of the sum allowed, was ordered to be given into my hands, to be employed for my own purposes, and for any military repairs or arrangements that I might think required in the castle. Two servants, at my choice, were to be considered as my own special attendants; and the Baron himself distinctly announced to the retainers assembled in the public hall, that, in case of peril or attack, from the tide of war rolling in that direction, the supreme command of all things was to rest with me during his absence.

No sooner had these arrangements been made, than he himself set out again for Paris, promising to return at the end of six months, and leaving an old and faithful attendant of his dead wife as in some sort the governess of his daughter.

The affection which the Baroness had always entertained towards me, had communicated itself to the good old servant I have mentioned, Donine le Mery; and she declared, after the Baron was gone, that the greatest consolations she could receive after the death of her mistress, were first, the promise of her Lord that she should remain ever with Mademoiselle Louise, and next to see me have the command of the castle. Whatever she sought, whatever she wished for, the good soubrette *came to me* to seek it; and if Louise herself had been

inclined to cling to me with all a sister's affection before her mother's death, she was now ten times more disposed to do so, when she had no other companion to whom she could pour forth undisguised all her feelings and all her thoughts. Her brothers, younger than herself in age, were still younger in mind; and her good attendant, though the best of all creatures, was too far below her in education to permit of any interchange of thought between them.

To me, therefore, the poor girl turned with the full confidence of childhood and unbounded affection. I was the companion of her walks, and of her rides, and of her solitary hours. I remembered her as an infant, I had seen her grow up day by day under my eyes; time seemed to make no difference; she was still a mere child in my sight. I looked upon her as a dear but far younger sister; and I never found that either I myself or any one else could dream there was a possibility such a change could take place in her feelings or in mine, which could be dangerous to the one or to the other.

The end of the six months came; but the Baron returned not, and he did not even hint in his letters that such an event was likely to take place. He said that he had been delayed by various circumstances—that the arrangements he had made in regard to the château must continue in force till his coming; but he mentioned no period of return, and, in truth, was once more entangled in the meshes of that net from which he had only been withdrawn for a time by the couriers which summoned him to his wife's death-bed.

In the mean time the days passed away happily enough. I had gained importance in the eyes of all around me, deference and attention were paid to me by the attendants, and had I not been disturbed by the frequent thought that the best season of my life was passing away, that the days of youth were flying by in inactivity when I felt myself formed for action, I could have been well contented there in the society of that sweet girl to whom

I was all in all, and of two generous and high-spirited boys who loved me with all the strength and energy of youthful affection.

A year passed and the Baron came not. Louise was now growing up towards womanhood; the warm blush mantled more deeply on her cheek, her eye gained a brighter lustre, her lip acquired a warmer red; her mind, too, expanded every hour, as if to keep pace with that fair form which was each day acquiring additional beauty.

As she wandered along beside me, her conversation was more imaginative, more full of deep thought; and we talked over a thousand things in which fancy and feeling linked our thoughts together so as to remain inseparable for ever. There was thus formed for me a store of ideas, in regard to which I have since felt,—alas! how painfully—that they could never be mentioned, that they could never be alluded to in the slightest manner, without calling up in my bosom the thought of her, of her words, of her looks, of scenes long past, and of departed happiness. Nor, indeed, could it be otherwise with her: we created in fact, for ourselves, a world of magic aspirations, with a straight and even pathway on which fancy guided by memory ran back like lightning from the present to the past.

We talked of her mother and of the days gone by, and we recalled all her sweetness, and her beauty, and her tenderness towards us both; and more than once we mingled our tears together, when we recollected all that she had done to win and merit love, and that the eternal barrier had fallen between us and her, shutting us out from all communication with the loved and the departed. We talked of the future and of the world—the wide unknown world open before us both. She spoke of it herself with awe and shuddering, as if she foresaw and would have shrunk from the griefs, and cares, and anxieties before her. Often also we would have recourse to dreams to chase away apprehensions;

she would inquire of me what the great capital was like; and when she found I could in no degree satisfy her, she would apply to fancy and build up an enchanted city from the gay things of her own imagination.

The bright and glorious universe, too, afforded to both of us a thousand themes for speculation; other lands would rise up before the mind's eye clothed with brightness not their own; and when I spoke of Italy or Spain, the vast and beautiful creations of art, a climate of sunshine, a soil of fertility, and a courteous and friendly people, such as I had read in the vague or the overcharged accounts of travellers, her countenance would glow brightly, her young eye sparkle, and she would wish to be a journeyer through such scenes with people who could love them or admire them like herself.

Frequently in our ramblings her brothers would accompany us, and during a great part of the morning I was constantly with them, acting, in some degree, the part of their preceptor, or taking a share in those instructions which were communicated to them by masters from the capital of Guienne. They loved me well, too, and on looking back to that time I can recollect no one feeling in my own bosom,—I cannot believe that there was any one in the bosoms of those who surrounded me,—the natural tendency of which was calculated to give a moment's pain to any one of the small but united party which then tenanted the château of Blancford.

Such was the state of all things, till Louise reached the age of fifteen; and I feel confident that I could have gone on with the same feelings towards her perfectly unchanged, and looking upon her merely as a sister, had not other events intervened which soon separated us from each other.

At this point may be said to end the period of my early life, which—like an old picture painted at first in vivid colours soon loses the brightness of its hues, becomes mellower but less distinct to the eye, then grows grey and dim, and then is almost obscured alto-

gether—has now greatly faded away from memory, though the impressions were then as bright and vivid, as, perhaps, any that I have received since.

Two days before the period at which Louise concluded her fifteenth year, messengers from her father, whom they left at no greater distance than Barbesieux, announced his sudden return. His letter contained merely intelligence of the fact, that he would be at the château of Blancford at supper-time on the ensuing day. I shall not easily forget the anxiety with which we all waited for his appearance, the messenger having informed us of more than the letter that he bore, namely, that the Baron had wedded another bride, whom he was now bringing home from the capital, where she had remained, while the wife of another, somewhat too long for her own honour, for the Baron's reputation, and for the peace of a husband, whom she speedily ceased to mourn.

Hitherto I have given but a general view of all that passed during my early years, but I must now give a more minute account of the events that followed; for, from the day in which my cousin's new bride set her foot within those doors, my fate underwent a greater change than any to which it had yet been subject.

CHAPTER II.

It may well be believed that we counted the minutes as the evening of the second day went by. Every one there present felt that there was a book to be opened before them that night, on the pages of which the future destiny of all was, more or less, distinctly written. The two boys felt it much, but they felt it with some sort of eagerness and some anticipations of pleasure. Old Monsieur la Tour looked grave and thoughtful, as well *he might; for* he was the only one there present who

was fully aware of the character and previous history of the person about to be added to the domestic circle at Blancford. I had heard something, indeed, but not all; but to counterbalance any painful reflections, I had the prospect before me of entering upon a new and more active course of being, and fulfilling the destinies to which the spirit within my bosom called me.

The person who felt the most on the occasion was Louise de Blancford; and nobody could doubt that—though a portion of the happiness of every one there present was in some way to be affected—it was her whole fate, peace, comfort, and tranquillity, which then trembled in the balance. The boys would soon naturally seek the tented field, or plunge into the occupations of the city or the court; but she was to remain alone, with the happiness of every moment in the hands and at the disposal of another.

She was at that time as beautiful as a young rose, with a countenance upon which all the emotions of her pure heart traced themselves in an instant, as they arose in her bosom; and I could see her eye turn towards me from time to time, with an anxious and inquiring glance, which showed me at once the feelings that were going on within, and told me all that she would have asked, although no words were spoken. I did my best to comfort her, and to raise up hope of bright and happy things. Perhaps I did so hypocritically; but surely it was pardonable, when I found that cheerful moments were passing away, perhaps for ever, to give her as many as I could, till the power of so doing was absolutely taken from me.

It was a bright and beautiful summer's evening; and, going out upon the sloping hill which was crowned by the castle, we looked in the direction where we expected to see the cavalcade appear, and watched anxiously for the first spear-head rising above the distant trees.

We waited long, however; the sun descended to the horizon *in splendour*: the whole sky was rosy with his

light; the very air itself seemed to be filled with purple rays; and the woods, and villages, and towers around, were all steeped in the same rich and glowing hue. It seemed to speak of hope and bright days to come; and yet, though we were all young, and under the soft guardianship of kind inexperience, our hearts refused to receive the colouring of the bright scene without; and the sweetness of the evening seemed rather to make us more melancholy, than to raise our expectations.

The sun went down slowly; the distant lines of the country assumed the most intense blue; the last rays of the setting orb poured through a hollow way in the deep masses of the forest, and caught upon a large piece of water at the foot of the hill, rendering one part like a sea of liquid gold, while the other remained shadowed by a wood as black as night. The moon, too, was coming up in the western sky, together with a single star, so pure, so soft, so full of pale light, that it seemed like a drop fallen from the eyes of the departing sun.

Louise's hand rested sisterly upon my arm; we gazed upon the glowing west and the deep blue lines beyond; we gazed upon the pale pure east, with the moon and the stars; and we gazed upon the golden water, and the shadowy wood, and the higher towers of the castle, partly lighted up, as if on fire, with beams that we could no longer behold, and partly buried in profound shadow. We then turned our eyes upon each other; and oh, how I wished at that moment, that it had been in my power to command the fate of that sweet girl, and by my will alone to insure that she should be happy!

At that moment we heard the distant sound of a trumpet; but it was far, far off, borne upon the wings of the soft westerly wind. Neither banner, nor spear, nor cavalcade, could be seen as far as the eye could reach; and after gazing for a few minutes longer, we re-entered the castle, and waited there till we heard the sound of *horses coming* up the hill.

All ran down at once from the room where we had been sitting; Louise and the old clergyman to the great hall, I and my two young cousins to welcome the baron at the drawbridge. He came, accompanied by a long train of retainers, with a carriage and a horse litter, containing his new wife and her manifold attendants. The torches and lanterns showed us a countenance much changed since we had last seen him, older in appearance than in reality, thinner and more harsh than ever. There was a heavy frown, too, upon his brow, and it was evident that something had gone wrong on the road.

To me he spoke but one word, in answer to my inquiries after his health, and the boys who were pressing round him with the eagerness of natural affection, he pushed roughly away, telling them that they encumbered him. He then approached the side of the carriage and handed out the lady, who being of course masked for the journey, did not suffer her face to appear. He led her at once into the hall, where Louise and the old clergyman had remained; and his daughter, who was the only person that seemed to shrink back from himself and his new wife, was the only one to whom he spoke kindly and tenderly.

There, sheltered from the wind and with plenty of light around, the lady took off her velvet mask; and oh! how every idea which I had previously formed of what her person was likely to present, vanished in a single instant! As she lifted that mask from her face the imagination of memory conjured up in a moment the beautiful form of the first wife, and set it beside the new one. Certainly I had expected to find transcendent beauty in the being who had lured the heart of the husband away from such a lovely and amiable being, and who, after having made her miserable during life, had taken her place when dead.

The figure of the new Baroness was fine, it is true; tall, commanding, well-proportioned; but it wanted that oft and *easy grace*, that flowing symmetry of every line

which had distinguished her predecessor, and if there was a difference and inferiority in figure, what was there not in countenance? She was no longer young; the features were large and strongly marked, the eyes bright, indeed, and full of fire, but that was the fire of a harsh and domineering temper; and they were only softened, if at all, by a look of wanton meaning which sometimes came across them. The lips were thin and generally closely shut, though the teeth were fine which they concealed; the chin was rounded, but somewhat projecting; the cheek-bones were high; and the skin, though not brown, was coarse. There was a good deal of colour on the face, so much indeed, that I should have supposed it not altogether natural, had it not been roughly scattered over the cheek with a sort of mottled appearance, which convinced me that art had no share in placing it there. The hair was fine and luxuriant, although she had passed her prime, and her hand was large and somewhat coarse, though much pains had been taken to keep it soft and white.

She gazed at Louise from head to foot, with a look of scrutiny, and apparently some surprise.

"You told me that she was a girl, a mere child," the lady said, addressing the Baron, as he introduced his daughter to her. "Why, this is a woman!"

"She was a child when I left her, Madam," replied the Baron, "and you may see that she is a child in heart still, by the blushes which your words call up."

"She looks all the prettier for them," replied the Baroness; "but I must teach her not to be such a spendthrift, and to reserve them for occasions when they will have some effect. And pray who is this young gentleman?" she proceeded, turning towards me while that meaning look came up in her eyes. "Not your eldest son, I suppose, my lord, for he was only twelve years old when last I heard of him, and he has not probably made such a rapid jump as the young lady. If *he have, he has* gotten him goodly limbs in a short time."

And she ran her eyes over me with the same unblushing effrontery with which she had gazed upon Louise.

"This, Madam," replied the Baron, bitterly, "is a cousin of mine, Henri de Cerons, son of another cousin, Henri de Cerons, who has done me the honour of living in my house for the last twenty years."

The blood came up into my cheeks as I heard him speak. "I have been, Madam," I said, taking up the words immediately, "a poor pensioner upon my cousin's bounty since the period that he speaks of. It was then that the death of my noble father left me dependent, with nothing but a sword, which he had rendered glorious, for my future fortune."

"It proved but a poor fortune to him," replied my cousin, frowning at me, "and you have suffered it somewhat to rust in the scabbard, methinks, Master Henri."

"At your own request for the last two years, my lord," I replied; "and it shall do so no longer."

I was going to add more, though I saw that the Baron's mood was becoming every moment more and more fierce. But the eyes of both at that moment fell upon Louise, and we beheld the tears running through her long eyelashes, and down her cheeks.

"Come, come, no more, no more," he said; "let us drop such subjects, and not make the evening bitter. Madam, I will show you your apartments. Supper, I hope, will soon be ready."

"And the Baron in a better humour," said the lady, giving a sarcastic look round as she swept up the hall after him.

We left her lord and the attendants to show her the way; and the five who had tenanted the castle before her coming remained behind in the hall, gazing upon each other, while memory again drew a comparison between the present and the past, the most painful, the most bitter that it is possible to conceive. No one spoke; the sensations in the heart of every one were too dark

and sad for us to give them utterance, and before a word was uttered the Baron had returned.

How the cheerful meal of supper passed over that night in the château of Blancford, may be easily conceived, for the same spirit which had marked the return of the lord of that castle to his dwelling, pervaded the whole conversation. Why or how he had been induced to wed the woman whom he had brought thither, might be difficult to say; but it was very evident that, where there could never have been any esteem, there now remained no affection. We were all silent, but the lord and lady of the house, except when from time to time good Monsieur la Tour endeavoured to break the restraint by a word upon some ordinary subject, or when I replied to him, which act seemed not a little to create the Baron's surprise that I should presume to converse in his presence.

When the meal was over, the lady declared she was fatigued, and retired speedily to rest. Louise followed; and, as there was now no cheerful circle gathered together in the evening to converse over the events of the day, I was about also to retire very soon; but the Baron stopped me, saying he wished to speak to me, with a sort of dull leaden look about his eyes, which he put on when he wanted to assume an air of despotic rule, and to announce his purpose in such a way as to admit of no reply.

The clergyman also stayed; and, turning to me, the Baron said, "It is time, my fair cousin, if we may judge by the specimens which you have given us to-night of your conversational powers, that you should find yourself a new home."

"I am not only quite ready, my lord," I replied, "but fully determined to do so as speedily as may be."

"It may be very speedily, indeed, then," replied the Baron, "for I have already arranged the whole matter for you. You will be pleased to set out to-morrow *morning* for the town of Pau, in Bearn; and I will fur-

nish you with letters to the Protestant clergyman of that place, who will put you in the proper way so to complete your education in the college as to become, I trust, a worthy member of our church.—Nay, hear me, hear me to the end. Your maintenance and the expenses of your studies, till the period of your taking orders, will be borne by myself, provided your conduct is such as to justify my kindness. And having done this, I think I have fulfilled to the utmost the promises which I was induced to make to your late father."

"Your lordship has informed me before now," I replied, "that it was my father's wish that I should be a soldier, and pursue the profession which all my race have followed. You informed me once, also, that you had promised him it should be so, and that you would place me in that course where he had won glory."

"Of course, sir," replied the Baron, frowning fiercely upon me, "all such promises were conditional, as were also his requests. He left your fate to my discretion, and did not dictate to me how I was to deal with the boy whom I brought up from charity."

The words were galling enough, but I struggled hard to keep down the demon of pride—a demon which had endured enough surely to quell him in my heart.

I therefore replied at once, "My father's wishes, my lord, I am perfectly aware, can be no law to you. To me, however, they would be a law, even did not my own inclinations second them. It is my determination, therefore—"

"Hush, hush!" said the good clergyman; "hush, my dear Henri. Do not speak of your determination; but leave it to your cousin to take into consideration the motives that you have mentioned."

"Leave him to his own obstinate folly, La Tour," replied my cousin, turning from me. "I have told him all that I will do. I have made him what may well be considered a noble offer. I give him till to-morrow to think *of it; and, if he* do not accept it, then I will drive

him from my door like an ungrateful hound, and send him forth a beggar to the fate he deserves."

Thus saying, he turned and abruptly quitted the hall; while I remained, as may well be conceived, fully determined never to eat bread again at the expense of such a man. I remained thoughtful and silent for a moment, while La Tour gazed with interest and anxiety in my face, and at last asked me, "What do you intend to do, Henri?"

"To keep my resolution, excellent friend," I replied. "You cannot suppose that such words as I have heard can at all shake my purpose."

"But consider, my dear boy," replied the clergyman, "you are utterly without means of support. I fear, Henri, that you do not know how little is to be gained in the barren field of war; and, at all events, you will be obliged at first to support yourself till you can receive pay."

"It matters not, my good friend," I replied; "I should lose my own esteem for ever—my heart would have no strength to struggle with the world, if I let this man set his foot upon it again."

The clergyman said nothing more to change my purpose, for he saw that it was unchangeable; but he answered, "At all events, then, Henri, take what little gold I have. I need it not, my boy; and I have always the means of support. You will not mind taking it from me."

"I will not take it all," I replied, kissing his hand; "but to show you how willingly I can bend my pride to depend upon one that loves me, I will take twenty gold crowns from you; and that shall be the fortune with which I go forth into the world. I have, indeed, nearly treble that sum in my own chamber, but that belongs to a man from whom I will take nothing; so that you shall give it to him to-morrow, after I am gone."

"Do you go early, then?" demanded the clergyman, *looking* anxiously upon me.

"As early as possible," I replied; and he then told me that he would bring the money to my little room.

Thither I now turned my steps, and the good clergyman soon followed. He gave me the sum I had agreed to take from his little store, and pressed upon me more, which I would not accept. He sought also to persuade me that I had every right to keep the money which the Baron had allowed me; but on that score my mind was made up, and I would hear no arguments.

A long conversation then ensued, and La Tour added many wise counsels and noble precepts to many which had gone before. I treasured them in my mind; and, if I have not always followed them exactly, in the strife of passion and the assault of temptation, at all events everything that has been good in my conduct, or estimable in my character, I owe first to the sweet influence of her who so tenderly cultivated my youth, and next, to the counsels and exhortations of that good man.

It was nearly one o'clock in the morning when he left me; and then I sat down to consider what should be my next step.

What were the Baron's habits now I knew not; but him I was resolved to see no more. All the rest of the family, however, were generally up not long after daybreak; and if I remained, I knew that there must be a bitter parting both with Louise and with the boys; most likely an angry parting, also, with the Baron, and perhaps the pain of seeing the expression of his children's love for me call down his wrath upon them. I thought of it all, and determined to suffer alone, as far as might be.

I made all my preparations in haste; took with me a few jewels and trinkets which I inherited from my mother, and those the Baroness had given me; packed up the necessary clothes which I intended to carry away; destroyed many a memorial of the place and its inhabitants, which I did not choose to have exposed to the harsh eyes of the Baron, or the impure ones of his new

wife; and, only preserving some little things in the handwriting of poor Louise, I prepared to take my departure for ever from the dwelling which I had so long inhabited.

As I stood upon the threshold, intending to waken one of the grooms, whom I had chosen, at the time the Baron had last visited the castle, to attend upon me, having occasion for some one to carry my valise to the next cabaret, a thousand recollections of the place, sweet, and happy, and affectionate, crowded upon my heart; a thousand gloomy images of the future rose up before my eyes; Hope hung down her torch, as if its light had been extinguished; and Memory strove to bind me to that past, from which I was tearing myself away.

I looked round the little room which I had inhabited, and every object that my eye fell upon acquired an interest that it had never acquired before. The dreams of childhood, the thoughts of other years, the figures of some long gone, came back in crowds, and tenanted the apartment; and my heart would have broken if I had not wept.

My tears were quickly dried, however; and I went to wake the boy, and tell him of my purpose. I found him in so sound a sleep that I could hardly wake him; and after he was roused he gazed round him stupidly for a moment, as if he did not well comprehend what I meant. The next instant, however, he sprang up with alacrity, and cast on his clothes. We went together to bring the valise from my room, and then waiting till we heard the guard (for we were still in a state of war) going round to the front gate, we descended quietly by the little staircase, and passed through the court.

As all the military arrangements in the castle had been, for the last two years, in my hands alone, the gates were thrown open at my first word. The men looked surprised, it is true; but they did not presume *to ask* any questions, or to make any observations, at *least in* my hearing; and issuing out of the château

about two in the morning, I stood upon Blancford Lee, prepared to seek my future fortunes with my own hand.

CHAPTER III.

THERE were still some sad feelings in my heart which would not be driven forth; but, nevertheless, I struggled hard against them, and the natural hopefulness of youth was beginning to do its part, so far, at least, that I could find some sources of consolation in the aspect of the world around me. The moon was just going down, appearing large and red, through a light haze upon the edge of the horizon. The stars over head were light, but they were far, far distant, seeming to my fancy like some of the bright imaginations of early youth, brilliant, but unattainable. I looked to the eastern sky, however, and there, upon the very edge of the horizon, was a faint, glimmering light, the first announcement of the distant dawning. There seemed to me to be hope and promise in that very sight.

"I may be covered with darkness and night," I said to myself, "but the day will certainly come at length; and, whether it be fair or bad, it too will pass away."

It is the nature of man to trust in auguries; they have been found in the flight of birds, or in the entrails of the sacrifice. Let me find promises or threatenings in the various aspects of nature, where the hand of the Almighty has marked His will; and, in the course of one train of events, has often pointed out what must be the course of another.

As I walked along, I did what few young men on their outset in life think fit to do—I considered deliberately and carefully what was to be the general tone of my demeanour, what the general plan of my conduct in the path *that lay before* me. I considered how I stood

towards the world that I was about to enter; looked at the vulnerable points in my nature; considered where I was most likely to be attacked, and how I might best defend myself. I had arrived at an age when the human intellect is in full strength; I had much acquaintance with books, and my mind, therefore, was not enfeebled for want of exercise. I had every power of looking into my own heart, guiding, guarding, and directing myself, which any other man at the same age possesses. But where I was deficient was in knowledge of the world, and of my fellow-men; and here I felt that I was utterly ignorant and without experience.

I had, indeed, had some little dealings with mankind during the last two or three years; but that had only served to confirm a fact which books before had taught me,—that, in general, man looks upon himself but as a human shark, whose great object it must ever be to seize upon and devour the unwary.

In order, then, at once to conceal and defend my weak point, till it could be remedied by knowledge and observation, was one part of my determination. But there were other things to be considered; and I made up my mind as to the general conduct I was to pursue before I reached the first village inn. To be honest and true, daring and firm, was of course the foundation of all; but, in order to prevent those with whom I was likely to have dealings from perceiving my ignorance of the world, I made up my mind to put a guard upon my lips; to affect a light and jesting tone, in order to conceal deeper feelings; to assume that perfect indifference to all things, which I had already learned was a natural consequence of that experience which I did not possess; and, repressing every expression either of surprise, pleasure, or grief, to be in some degree a stoic externally, and never to lay open my heart to any persons, till I had tried them long and deeply.

To execute such a resolution may appear more difficult *than to* form it; but there were many things which

rendered the enterprise more easy to me than it would have proved to other men. My natural character was gay and light, not easily repressed, with a large share of hope, and a fearlessness of consequences, which gave me a great command over my own actions, and over those of others. The pitiful neglect and want of respect with which my cousin's servants had treated me, as soon as another heir had appeared in his house, had taught me to assume a tone of indifferent contempt, when the occasion served, which now stood me in great stead; and the very feelings of grief and indignation which were at my heart, by giving me matter to dwell upon in my own bosom, rendered me more careless of all that passed without.

Such, then, were my resolutions, and my means of accomplishing them, as far as the government of myself was concerned: but there were many other things, of course, to be thought of; with whom I was to take service; how I was to shape my course to join the army; how I was to obtain the necessary arms and equipments; for, following the determination I had before made, not to take anything from the castle but that which absolutely belonged to myself, I had left behind both the horses which had been given to me for my use, and the arms in which I had exercised myself since I was a boy, with the exception of the sword and dagger that I usually wore, and a rich knife, with a hilt and a sheath of gold, inlaid with jewels, which my father had brought from the East, when warring against the Turks, in former days.

On the first point—how I was to join the army, many difficulties existed. The short peace which had been granted to the Protestants had now been some months at an end, and the third war of religion had already begun. The principal forces of the Huguenots were assembled in the neighbourhood of Rochelle, and a considerable distance remained to be traversed before I could hope to fall in with the army.

While I was considering all these things the eastern

sky became somewhat brighter, and the faint pink of the morning air afforded sufficient light to see all the objects distinctly. I had taken my way towards Bordeaux, as the first great town where I could hope to obtain any information, and had walked on rapidly, while the boy, carrying on his shoulder the valise with which I had charged him, trudged on in perfect silence by my side, without making the slightest inquiry as to the end or object of my journey, or where he himself was going.

I had chosen him, indeed, from the rest of the servants, when I was permitted to select two of them to attend upon me, principally because he had always shown both respect and attachment towards me, but scarcely less, because there was a degree of similarity between his fate and my own; his father having been killed at the battle of St. Denis, and he left an orphan to the care of strangers. He was now a stout active youth of about nineteen, somewhat variable in his mood, occasionally loquacious, but more frequently quite the reverse; replying with a sharp, quick word, observing keenly all that passed, and having much shrewd sense under a somewhat dull and boorish exterior. On the present occasion, however, his taciturnity had been even more marked than usual. When I had roused him, at first, he had looked at me with some wonder, but he had not said a word since, doing exactly as I bade him in profound silence.

At the distance of about two miles from the château of Blancford, we reached the first village which boasted such a thing as an auberge; and there I had proposed to make the lad put down the valise, and, getting some one else to carry it forward with me, to give him some small pieces of money as a parting gift, and send him back. On entering the village, however, we found that no one was yet up, and though there was written over the door of the inn, "Here lodge travellers on foot. A dinner six sous. A bed eight sous. Come in and try!" the closed

door belied the hospitable invitation, and I was somewhat puzzled how to proceed.

"I suppose I must wait till they get up, Andriot," I said. "So you can put down the valise and return to the castle. I shall find somebody up presently to carry it on to Bordeaux for me."

"I can carry it on, sir," he said; "they'll be an hour before they're up, and I don't see why you should get an inn-boy while you've your own man."

"Alas! my good Andriot," I said, "you can be my own man no longer. I am too poor a gentleman to afford attendance upon me, and you had better go back at once, lest any review of the servants should be made at the château, and the Baron should be angry at your absence."

"The Baron may be angry once," said the lad; "but he'll not be angry any more than once with me, at least; for we all saw and heard enough last night to make me very glad when I found you were going. No, no, sir; I have been your servant for two years, and not the Baron's; and the château of Blancford is no more a home for me, if you are not there."

"But think awhile, my good Andriot," I replied; "it is utterly impossible for me either to pay you any wages or to support you. I go forth with scarcely the means of supporting myself till I reach the army. I seek fortune there as a common soldier, and may not even obtain, for aught I know, the means of gaining bread for myself with my own sword. Me, therefore, you cannot accompany; and you must remember how many chances there are in these troublous times against your obtaining any situation at all comparable to that which you may still hold in the château of Blancford."

"I have thought of all that you say, sir," he replied, "as we came along; for it is always right to think well what one is about, after one has taken a resolution. I took mine an hour or two ago. When you first roused me I was half *asleep*, and didn't understand what you

meant. But then, again, as soon as both my eyes were open I understood the whole, for I had thought to myself when I went to bed, that if what the Baroness's groom had said about the Baron and you was true, you would not stay in the castle much after daylight; so I made up my mind in a moment, as soon as I found that you were going. As to wages, I owe you three weeks' service, for you paid me a month in advance last Monday; then, as for food, I have taken care to have all the money that you ever gave me in my pocket, to the last sous; then, besides that, I have got three crowns of the sun, and two livres Tournois, which were brought me by Sampson the squire, from my poor father, when he was killed at St. Denis. So you see, sir, I have plenty to keep me for a year; and, as for the rest, if you are going to seek your fortune, I do not see why I should not go and seek mine with you."

"Well, then, Andriot," I replied with a smile, which I could not refrain, at his using arguments for following me, which were so like the reasons that existed in my own bosom for my own conduct—"if such be your resolution, take up the valise and let us go on. What you do is your voluntary act, and at any time that you think fit to leave me, you shall do so; so pray Heaven send you soon a wealthier master, and one that can reward you for your fidelity."

"I hope to Heaven it may be so, sir," replied the youth; "and I don't suppose you'll be long before you have some piece of good luck. Fortune gets tired of troubling a man that cares little about her; and I have heard old Jansen, the Jew merchant, say that luck changes at five-and-twenty, at fifty, and at seventy-five, if a man but lives so long."

Thus saying, he once more lifted the valise; and I then perceived for the first time, that he had strapped on it a little packet of his own goods and chattels; which showed that his resolution had, as he said, been *taken before* he quitted the château.

On approaching the gates of Bordeaux, it became necessary to determine to what inn we should go. My meagre finances did not permit of my lodging, for even a day, at any of the expensive auberges of the Gascon capital; and I bethought me that Andriot, born and brought up in that neighbourhood, was much more likely to be acquainted with the inferior inns than myself. I therefore consulted him upon the subject, and he replied at once:—

"Oh! sir, go to the little inn kept by Jacques de Cannes, called the Soleil Levant, at the end of the Rue de Minimes. It is a poor place, but you will have plenty of Protestant news there, and you will get a good dinner for a small sum. In the evening, when you have settled all, we can go on to Carbon Blanc, or perhaps to Cubzac."

"We could not have a more auspicious name," I replied, "than the rising sun, Andriot: and see where the sun is indeed rising, and with as bright an aspect as one could desire."

Andriot instantly pulled off his cap towards the east, with as much apparent reverence as ever did Persian to the rising orb of day. "Send us good luck, monseigneur," he said, addressing the sun; and then, with a gay laugh, full of careless hope and light-hearted cheerfulness, he followed my steps, and in a quarter of an hour we were in the town of Bordeaux.

The doors of the Soleil Levant were by this time wide open, and it was evident by the joyous welcome given to Andriot, that it was not the first time that he had set his foot within those walls. I had just time to tell him that it might be prudent, for the time being, not to mention my name, when we were surrounded by half-a-dozen of his old friends and companions, who led us both into the little hall, where breakfast was in active preparation for those guests who had passed the night at the house. Only one of these, however, had as yet appeared; *and he was* seated at that one of the two

tables the room contained, which was nearest to the window that looked into the street. He was so placed, however, in the corner of the hall, that he could see the passengers who went by, without being remarked himself; and though I had passed the windows but a moment before, I had not perceived that there was anybody in the room.

According to the hint that I had given to Andriot, he merely informed Jacques de Cannes that I was a gentleman adventurer seeking my fortune as a soldier; with whom he had taken service, being sick of his late employ in the château de Blancford. This was said after I had taken a step or two forward towards the table, and just loud enough for me to hear. The worthy aubergiste answered in the same tone, demanding, with an expressive nod, "He is one of our people of course?"

"I should not be with him," replied the lad, "if he were not." And the aubergiste rejoining, in a somewhat lower tone, "Perhaps I can tell him where he is likely to find service by and by," left us to seek the bason of soup which, with half a loaf and a small bottle of very good wine, was our allotted breakfast.

Seating myself at the same table, while Andriot took his place a little further down, I waited patiently for the arrival of my mess; giving from time to time a glance towards the previous occupant of the room, who was busily engaged in emptying the contents of his own bowl, and, apparently, taking very little notice of what was passing around him. As far as I could see, he was a good-looking man, somewhat below forty years of age, broad and powerfully made, with hair not red, but of a light glossy brown, curling round his brow with flowing and graceful waves. The mustaches which he wore upon his upper lip, were very thick and long, but lighter even in colour than his hair. The features were good, without being strikingly handsome; but when he opened his mouth, the expression of his whole face was injured by *the want of* three of his front teeth. There was a scar

or two on other parts of his countenance, which bespoke the soldier; and one of his hands, which rested somewhat listlessly on the table, while he ate his soup with the other, was disfigured by a large round scar on the back, and seemed to have been penetrated either by a spear or a ball. He ate his bread with his soup, but drank no wine till he had done; he then, however, nearly filled his cup, and, after having drunk it, looked up, saying, with a slight foreign accent, "Good wine in these parts. Are you of this country, young gentleman?"

"No," I replied, (for I was born on the banks of the Loire,) and having satisfied myself by speaking the simple truth in one monosyllable, I took no further notice till he said, "And yet yours is a Gascon accent, it seems to me."

"And yours a Scotch one," I replied.

"Well hit, my young falcon," replied the stranger, in a light tone; "you follow the game true."

"As every one should do," I replied; not a little doubtful of the character of my worthy companion, and answering no more than was absolutely necessary. The stranger, however, was not so easily to be frustrated; and he returned to the charge about my Gascon accent.

"Some birds," he said, "have a rare skill in deceiving their pursuers. I should not marvel still, if Guyenne had been your birth-place."

"You could not wish me a better," I answered.

"No, nor a shrewder wit, you think," he said; "however, I give you good morning."

And taking up his hat which lay beside him, he finished his small bottle of wine, and moved towards the door.

At that moment Jacques de Cannes was coming in with a bowl of soup for Andriot, and the stranger stopped him for a minute or two, saying something that we did not hear. The aubergiste replied in the same low voice, and the stranger, turning away, added aloud, "Not till I *have seen him* again, Maître Jacques."

After putting down the pottage for Andriot, the good aubergiste came up to me, and bending down his head, he said, "You are seeking service in arms, I think, seigneur; you could not trust to any one better than that gentleman who has just gone out. He is an old soldier and a good one, and as staunch a Protestant as ever lived. But he will be back here to dinner, and, if you like to talk to him about your views, he will most likely get you service."

My heart beat at the offer, I must confess, but yet, pursuing my cautious determinations, I was resolved neither to trust aubergiste nor stranger too far; and although I awaited with some impatience for the return of the latter, I schooled myself during the whole time of his absence, lest by too great heat I should show my own ignorance and inexperience, and fall into some snare.

About twenty minutes before the hour appointed for dinner, the stranger again entered the hall as I was holding one more consultation with Andriot upon what was the next step to be taken. Andriot had been greatly smitten with the stranger's appearance, and he now assured me with so many asseverations, that good Jacques de Cannes was one of the most excellent and serviceable men in France, that it was scarcely possible to doubt that he was well informed of the fact. Indeed, he added, a moment before the stranger made his appearance, that the worthy aubergiste stood in the near connexion with himself of a second cousin. Why he had not told me this at first I do not know; but it certainly did not in any degree diminish my confidence in the good landlord, to hear that he was related to one who had served me well and faithfully for two years.

"Then I may take his word fully as to the stranger's character, Andriot?" I said; "for I'm sure your cousin would tell me no falsehood."

The youth was replying eagerly, when the stranger, *as I have* said, entered, and taking off his hat,

approached the place where I stood. I had now a better view of him than before, and saw that he was as powerful in body, as I had been led to think was the case by the mere sight of his head and shoulders. He was graceful, too, and had the air of a gentleman, though his clothes were somewhat coarse, and displayed none of the ordinary colours affected by that rank. The scabbard of his sword, however, was of velvet, and the weapon was thrown so much back across his loins, that it was impossible for him to see the hilt. This was almost a certain sign, at that time, in France, of one who prided himself upon his birth, though the custom has now greatly changed, and we wear our swords almost straight upon the thigh.

"I am glad to find you here, young gentleman," he said; "and, if I may propose such a thing, we will ask Maître Jacques to give us our dinner in some little room apart, that we may talk over matters which may interest you to hear."

I thought of my small store of money, and of the additional expense which I might be led into; but it seemed that this was a lucky chance which had befallen me, and I determined not to throw it away. I accordingly assented, and we mounted into a chamber on the second floor, where a dinner, which, though certainly not equal to those of the château, was by no means bad, was soon set before us, and Maître Jacques retired to serve his ordinary guests below.

"Well, sir," said the stranger, as soon as we had helped ourselves and begun, "I understand your whole situation as well as if I had heard it."

"Which probably you have," I replied, in the dry tone that I had determined to maintain.

"No, upon my honour," replied the other. "I'll tell you how it all comes about, and you shall say whether I am right or wrong. First, then, and foremost, I see a gentleman of good manners and deportment, followed by a servant *carrying* a valise, very much better dressed

than myself, come into an inn for travellers on foot. I hear he has no horses with him, and he sits down to eat his soup and drink his wine, for which he pays three sous altogether, with a lace upon his pourpoint which cost at the very lowest twenty sous in all. From all this one gathers that, on some account or another—whether it be a duel, or whether it be any other cause—this gentleman does not wish the path he has chosen to be tracked, and perhaps is in some need, by accidental circumstances, of money or employment. The landlord of the inn tells me that he is seeking military service, and is on his way even now to join Condé, or the Admiral, or Andelot. I, therefore, conclude that he is willing to serve against those butchers who have been massacreing the poor Protestants throughout France. There is nothing very miraculous in all this. Am I not right?"

"In general you are," I replied; "but, let me ask, how is this to affect my acquaintance with you?"

"Why I will tell you in a moment," replied the stranger, in the same frank tone. "I happen at this moment to be engaged in the same cause, amongst the soldiers of which you are seeking service. I know that every man in the monarchy is wanted; and I wish both to give you such information as may enable you to join the army with all speed, and urge you to do so without a moment's delay."

"I propose hastening towards Rochelle as fast as possible," I replied.

"Rochelle!" he exclaimed, with a laugh; "why, my good young friend, you must have been living in some hermitage, where the news of what is passing in the world penetrates but rarely. The Protestants are no longer at Rochelle. Condé and the Admiral have advanced, the Lord knows how far, up the Loire, and Andelot himself has been at blows with Martigue far beyond Saumur."

My countenance fell as he spoke; for if my finances

had been barely sufficient to carry me scantily to Rochelle, the far greater journey that lay between me and the Protestant army rendered it almost impossible for me to accomplish the undertaking of joining it, except indeed as a mere beggar.

The stranger saw the effect that his words had produced, and demanded, with a smile, "Why has your brow grown clouded, young gentleman? what is it that makes you so suddenly gloomy?"

"The army," I replied, conquering all feelings of pride, "is much further than I expected, and my worldly wealth is but small."

The stranger looked at me fixedly for a moment, and then said, "You have served before, have you not? You seem of an age to have seen many a stout conflict."

I answered in the negative, however, evidently to his surprise; and he mused for a minute or two without speaking. It appeared to me, that my new acquaintance was considering more what should be his own conduct than what he should recommend for mine. "Have you not wherewithal to take you to the army?" he said, at length.

"Doubtless I have," I replied, "but not more; and if I spend what I have as I go, how am I to get a horse and arms when I arrive?"

"Oh, there is many a man in your case," replied the stranger. "You must not be nice when you get there: but you will find many a jockey—if there has been much fighting going on, and our party has had the advantage—who will be willing enough to supply you with a horse on the chance of your paying him a good sum for it within a certain time. It is a thing done every day. These jockeys buy horses that are taken from the enemy for an old song or a mess of pottage, and then sell them again, if they can find means, to those who will pay down. But if they cannot find such pleasant customers, they dispose of them to any soldier of fortune who is likely to *pay them well* at an after period. As to arms,

however, that is a more difficult matter; and I know not very well what to advise you to do. I see there is some story about you, if one did but know it; or your dress is not that of a man who cannot afford to buy himself a steel cap and a cuirass.—Have you nothing that you can sell?" he added: "that Turkish dagger in your belt,—if that be gold, it will furnish you well with what you want, and you must make your own right hand do the rest."

"I should not like to sell it," I replied, looking down at the dagger; "this knife is one that my father brought from the East, and was taken from a Turk killed by his own hand in battle. I should not like to sell it if I could avoid it."

"I fear, then," replied the stranger, "if you have nothing else to dispose of, you must even take to the arquebuse, buy no horse, and serve in the infantry. You will most likely find many a leader who will be glad to give you arms for your services; though I cannot think that a man of your figure was made for a *pedescal*. I should think that your father would rather see you part with the dagger than so lower yourself."

"My father is dead," I replied; "but, were he living, I think that what you say is true, and, therefore, I will part with it; but I would fain place it in such hands that I may redeem it again, in case of ever being able to do so."

"There are Jews in the world," the stranger exclaimed, with a laugh; "there are Jews in the world. Thank Heaven for all things,—there are Jews in the world. They will take it for six months, and lend you as much money thereon as will serve your purpose. Before that period is over, it is to be hoped that you will have clipped some of these gilded troops of the enemy of quite a sufficient portion of their golden fleece to recover your weapon. After dinner, we will go and see what is *the* value of the knife. It is a pretty toy, and, doubtless, *of good* steel; for these Turks declare, and I believe it

true, that the waters of Damascus temper iron far better than those either of Toledo or Milan."

It was joyful news for me to hear that I might thus obtain that which I most wanted, without absolutely parting with a thing which I prized not from its intrinsic value, but from the memories associated with it, and because I had some recollection of being told in my earliest youth, never to give it away. I thanked my new companion, therefore, warmly and sincerely, for the advice he had given.

"We may have more to say to each other hereafter," he answered, smiling. "I am not, perhaps, any more than yourself, quite what I seem; and the truth is, I am here recruiting men for a company of men-at-arms. I must not venture, indeed, to place any one therein who is not a tried and well-known man; otherwise, to say the truth, from your height, and look, and manner, I should not have scrupled to engage with you at once. We may meet again, however, as I have said, and then the first vacancy you may join us, if you have proved your manhood well upon the enemy. I am glad to find you come of a fighting race, however: that is a great thing in a man's favour; for courage runs in the blood as well as cowardice."

"If it be an inheritance," I replied, "I have every right to it; and at present it is my only one."

"I cannot say that originally I was much better provided myself," replied the stranger. "Good blood, strong limbs, and a heart without fear, however, have increased my inheritance; and I look upon the beginning of this war as just a call to the sheep-shearing. I take it as a matter of course, when I talk of your entering our band, that your blood is noble, one way or another."

"It is as good as your own," I replied.

"Indeed!" he said, with a somewhat mocking smile. "Then it is of a somewhat extraordinary quality: for the man who can boast descent from a long race of kings cannot go beyond mine."

"Perhaps you mean, if traced back to Adam," I replied, not quite liking his tone.

"No, young gentleman," he answered, very gravely; "I mean if traced back for twenty generations. But come, let us go seek this Jew, and see what he says the knife is worth."

Thus saying, he rose; and, following him through manifold turnings and windings in the fine old city of Bordeaux, I entered the little alley that lies just under the cathedral garden.

"Here lives a Jew," continued my companion, "with whom I have had some dealings. The nearer the church the farther from God, they say; so this misbegotten infidel plants himself close against the chief church."

A few steps farther brought us to a small dark doorway, which certainly gave no promise of wealth or traffic; and feeling his way up the stairs with his hands, my guide led me on to the second floor, where he knocked hard with his clenched fist against a door.

It was not opened at once to his summons: but a part of one of the panels, about two spans square, was drawn back, admitting a little light to the landing-place on which we stood, and through it a dark countenance with a long beard examined us carefully.

"Ah, it is you, is it, my good seigneur!" cried the Jew, after having more than once keenly looked on my companion's face. "I will open the door directly, and let you in."

And almost as he spoke bolts and bars were withdrawn, and the door opening, gave us admission into a room which presented a very strange scene.

There were only two persons in the chamber; the first of which was the Jew himself, a man of about fifty years of age, dressed in the long flowing black robe usually worn by his people. The top of his head was quite bald; for though he wore a small black velvet cap upon it, he uncovered himself on the entrance of my companion, and bowed down almost to the ground. His

hair, however, and beard were jetty black, without a single grey hair, and his complexion was of that deep Oriental yellow-brown not uncommon to his nation.

The other person whom the room contained was a girl of about eleven or twelve years of age,—as beautiful a little creature as it is possible to conceive; having, indeed, some resemblance to the Jew in feature, but so softened with womanly and with childish beauty, that all harshness was done away. She was dressed in white; but sat playing on a pile of many-coloured shawls, winding them fancifully round her, and in so doing, throwing her beautiful figure into attitudes the most graceful that it is possible to conceive.

The interior of the chamber itself, however, had a great many other objects to attract the eye on every side. It seemed a complete show-room of rich and valuable things. On a table near the window appeared piles of different jewels and trinkets; swords, silver-mounted daggers, and many an implement of modern and ancient warfare, were scattered around on every side: in other corners lay rich dresses and magnificent embroidery; in others, piles of carpets and tapestries, and pieces of silk and velvet. Rich lace of gold and silver, and many books, perhaps invaluable in themselves, and enriched by clasps and mountings of fine filigree-work, were cast promiscuously together, with a thousand articles of high price, which I have now forgotten.

Our business was soon explained to the Jew; and taking the Turkish dagger, he looked at it, saying that he would give ten crowns for it, after he had touched a part of the haft with a touchstone.

"Ten crowns!" exclaimed my Scottish companion. "By Abraham's beard, Solomon Ahar, thou art more a Jew than the rest of thy tribe. See you not that the stones are real?"

"Nay!" exclaimed the Jew, with a look of surprise. "Is it so?" And, drawing near to the window, he examined it *again*, by the faint light that entered the

chamber, through the manifold tall courts and stacks of chimneys behind.

"As true as thou art a son of Israel," replied the Scotchman. But ere he could say more, the Jew himself exclaimed, "Blessed be heaven! it is so, indeed. Here are—let me see—six, seven, nine, fourteen fine stones. Nay, then, I will give the gentleman a hundred crowns an he choose to leave it with me, as what the people of Lombardy call a pignus or pledge; and if he will sell it outright, I think I could venture to go as far as a hundred and fifty, or two hundred."

"Which means that it is worth three."

"On my honour, on my conscience!" cried the Jew; and was beginning to bargain upon the worth of the thing, when I cut short the discussion, by exclaiming, "I have no intention of selling the dagger: it is but for a temporary need that I want the money, and trust to pay it back full soon."

"He shall give thee a hundred and fifty for it, at least," exclaimed the Scotchman. "I know how to deal with the tribe of Israel. Look ye, Master Solomon. The haft of the dagger is worth three hundred crowns or more. If the youth lives, returns, and claims it, you gain your interest of fifteen hard per cent. If he gets himself killed, as is a thousand chances to one, or dies a natural death, or never finds a crown to spare to pay thee—all of which are very probable, the dagger is yours at the end of six months or a year, and then you gain double for the loan."

"I cannot give it," replied the Jew; "I cannot give it. It is too much. It would be my ruin. How often am I a loser! What taxes have I not to pay!—No, I cannot give it, I will not give it. There is your dagger, young gentleman."

I hesitated whether I should take the weapon; but the Scotchman gave me a nod, saying, "Take it, take it; there are more Jews in Bordeaux than he." And I was *taking it back* into my hand, when the girl suddenly left

off her sport with the shawls, and, plucking the old man by the robe, she said, "Give it him, my father; give him the money. He seems as if he would fain have it. He wants it, and thou dost not."

The Jew still was silent, only putting the child away with his hand, and saying, when she urged him farther, "Silence, prattler; what is it to thee?"

The girl, turning away from him, looked up in my face; and I laid my hand upon her jetty locks, saying, "I thank thee, my pretty maiden. He will not yield to thee; but thou art kind, however."

"Nay," said the Jew; "I will yield something. You shall have a hundred and twenty-five."

"No!" said the Scot, turning towards the door. "We shall get a hundred and fifty for it from Moses Levi."

The Jew hesitated for a moment longer; but when my companion laid his hand upon the lock of the door, as if to go out, he said, "Stay, stay: thou shalt have it, though I vow that it is the full value of the thing."

He carried an inkhorn at his button, and soon wrote down upon two pieces of vellum a mutual acknowledgment between him and me; the one was drawn up in his name, recognizing the receipt of the dagger, specifying every stone that it contained, and promising its restitution on the payment of the sum of a hundred and fifty crowns, together with interest at the rate of fifteen per cent. The other was on my part acknowledging the receipt of the hundred and fifty crowns, and promising to return it within the space of twelve months, paying an interest of fifteen per cent.[1]

As soon as this was concluded, the money was paid down, and the weapon, with its glittering hilt, surrendered. I still wanted a leathern bag to carry the money in; but in the store of the Jew all things were to be found; and having taken one from a cabinet in the room, he made me pay about double the value, and thus we departed,—I far richer than I had expected to be for many a *year, but feeling* yet a degree of regret and dis-

quietude at having suffered the last gift of my father to pass out of my own hand, which, for the time, more than counterbalanced the pleasure of receiving the money, even though it was to furnish me with the means of pursuing that profession for which he himself had destined me.

CHAPTER IV.

WHEN we had quitted the Jew's house, my companion laughed aloud in his peculiar, clear, merry, careless way.

"These sons of Israel!" he said, "these sons of Israel! it needs a long acquaintance to deal with them wisely; for they always take their chance of those who traffic with them being fools, in order to cheat them, if it be possible. The old sinner knew that those were real jewels in the dagger from the first moment he set eyes on it; but he hazarded offering a small sum, in case you should not know the fact. I took my chance the other way, and swore they were real jewels, though I knew nothing about it; being very sure that, if they were not, he would not suffer me to deceive him. However, you are now not only master of enough to arm you from head to heel, as a proper man-at-arms, and to buy you a horse, but to arm half a dozen others lightly, to follow you; and, if you will take my counsel, I think I can set you off, on a plan by which you may gain both fame and fortune—or lose your life, remember!—for that must always be put at stake. Come to the inn, however,—come to the inn; and we will talk more."

I followed him through the streets, meditating on what he had said, and inclined very strongly to trust him, but feeling that want of confidence in myself which *was produced* by a knowledge of my own inexperience,

and which prevented me from being at all sure whether I was dealing with an honest man or a knave. He had certainly put me in a way of obtaining money, which I could not have done myself, and he had as yet asked me for no share in the sum thus obtained. There was a frankness, too, in his whole demeanour, which produced a strong impression in his favour; and, though I was still upon my guard, yet I was well inclined to receive any advice that he might give me under a favourable view.

"Come, Master Jacques," he said, speaking to the landlord, whom we met upon the stairs of the inn, "let us have a bottle of your best wine, for we were interrupted in our draught to go away upon business."

The landlord bowed low at orders which landlords are always willing to hear; and the stranger led the way to the same room where we had before sat, humming away the time till the aubergiste returned. Ensconced at length in that room with the bottle and glasses before us, he began, in somewhat of a consequential tone, and with a look of superior knowledge, to direct my proceedings.

"You have now," he said, "the opportunity of making or marring your own fortunes. You have but very little experience—I have a great deal; and, were I placed exactly as you are, I would do as I am going to tell you to do. I would, in the first place, buy myself arms and horses here in Bordeaux, where you will get them cheaper than either at Rochelle or at Charenton, where they are in more request. I would arm myself completely at all points with a plain good suit, which may be had at a low price, of just as strong materials as if you paid two or three thousand livres for it. Then buy the armour of a demi-lance for that stout youth whom I saw with you below. Two horses may be had for you cheap enough, if you can ride well; for there is a maquignon, called Pierrot, has got a troop of wild devils *from the* Limousin, for which he can find

no sale here amongst the merchants and citizens, and soft-boned gentry of Bordeaux."

I smiled, replying, "We will ride them, if they can be ridden."

"I advise you," he continued, "to do this rather than to furnish yourself at the army, both because you will find it cheaper, and because it always looks better, and gives a higher opinion of a man when he joins his leader fully prepared. Besides, you have a chance of some little adventure on the road, which may take off the freshness of your arms, and give you some little reputation. Such things are as common in these days as they were in the times of the knights-errant. Now, what I propose for you to do, when you have joined the army, is, not for you to put yourself in this troop or that, as a simple man-at-arms; for that is the way to get yourself killed speedily, without anybody hearing anything of you; but to look about the camp for any stray vagabonds that may be about—I mean of those whose whole fortune consists in a steel cap, a breast-plate, and a horse; and the whole sum of whose virtues lies in courage. You will find two or three young fellows, too, at every corner, who, like yourself, are seeking service, fresh in arms and willing to stick to any leader who will but gallop them into the cannon's mouth. They are generally younger than you are, for you have been somewhat late in taking to the trade. That, however, will only make it the more likely they should follow you, which is the great thing; for, to be the leader of one of these bands is the sure means of getting on, whereas, to be a follower in one of them is the readiest way of getting hanged. You have, then, nothing to do, you know, but to take up absolutely the trade of adventurer, attack the enemy everywhere, harass him on every occasion, cut off his parties, attack every château where you think there is a soldier; in short, run your head against every stone *wall that* you meet with. You may chance to knock some

of them down; and if you do, you will gain a reputation which will soon put you at the head of a better band than that with which you set out. Good old soldiers will be glad to come to you then, and you may work yourself up to be a general by steadiness and perseverance."

"There are two things, however," I said, "which you have forgotten to mention; first, where I am to get the money to pay these recruits; for, after I have bought horses and arms for myself and Andriot, there will not be much left to pay any one."

"Oh, they will pay themselves, they will pay themselves," he said. "You may have, indeed, in the first instance, to give one or two of those vagabonds, who have seen service, a crown a week, just to make the beginning of a band; all the others you will take merely upon trial; and, of course, you must put the Catholics under contributions. If they will have war, let them have war and pay for it. It is an undoubted fact that, since the last peace, they have put to death in one town or another full ten thousand Protestants; and, therefore, we have a right to make them pay for such sorts of amusement. Then you will put the prisoners to ransom you know; and every one that is taken by your men pays you a share, too. You will, therefore, have plenty to keep the band up as soon as it is formed. But what was your next question?"

"Why, simply by whose authority I shall act," I replied; "for, not being of sufficient authority and rank to levy war on my own account, I must have some sanction for raising such a band."

"I had thought of that," he replied; "I had thought of that. Such things are not, indeed, much considered in these wars; and, after all, I believe you might do it on your own account: ay, and with right, for your father was a man of good nobility as well as courage; and though he never had a crown in his purse to bless himself, might have *spread* his own banner according to the *ordinances of St. Louis.*"

"Did you know my father?" I demanded, somewhat surprised: "and if you did know him, how have you found out that I am his son?"

"I knew your father but little," replied the other, "though we have fought side by side together before now; and, as to the rest, you forget that I saw you sign your name before the Jew. However, as it is better that you should have some authority for what you do, I will give you a letter to the Prince de Condé, telling him your plans and purposes, and he will not refuse you a commission under his own hand, at the request of Robert Stuart."

"Robert Stuart!" I exclaimed; "what he who killed the Constable Montmorency at the battle of St. Denis?"

"The same man that you mean," replied my companion; "but, for all that, I did not kill the Constable. The world gives me greater credit than I deserve. It was one of my band who shot him with a pistol. I took him, indeed, for he was down on the ground; and I thought he had formally surrendered, and believe so still, when up he jumped, and with the pommel of his sword dashed out my three front teeth, knocking me backwards on the ground, for I had dismounted to receive his sword. One of my fellows, seeing this, called out that he was as treacherous an enemy as a friend, and shot him on the spot. That is the exact truth of the story that people tell twenty different ways. And now, knowing who I am, you will wonder, perhaps, to see me here, in a little inn, paying a few sous for my dinner. But the truth is, I came to swell my band a little, by any veteran men at arms I can find, and also to meet here some half dozen of my friends from Scotland, who are about to join me. Now, there is a certain report gone abroad, well nigh as false as the other, that I was the person who caused that old meddling fool, the President Minard, to be assassinated. There is many a one of his friends here, in the good town of Bordeaux, *so that, till* I am well accompanied, it might not be *pleasant to* lodge at a great inn, and draw eyes upon me."

It may well be supposed that I now thanked this celebrated leader, gratefully, for what he had done and proposed to do in my behalf. But he replied that the Protestant cause was much at his heart; that he loved a good soldier and the son of a good soldier, and that what he had done for me was really nothing.

"Come," he said, at length, "let us go and seek for the horses and arms; bring your boy with you, and I will let my people know where I am, that, in case the ship arrives, they may come and tell me."

The horses were soon bought, about twenty of them having been brought out for me to try. For myself I chose one of the strongest and most fierce, having soon perceived that he was tractable and good in his temper, though he was perfectly unbroken. A lighter horse served the boy's turn; but I left my new friend to bargain with the dealer for the price of both, and was surprised to find the small sum at which he contrived to purchase the two. It is true the dealer knew him, and imagined that I was a man at arms newly engaged to serve under the Scotch captain.

The arms were procured in a similar manner; and, being now fully equipped, I returned with Stuart to the inn, telling him my intention of setting out for the army that very night, in order not to lose any time in pursuing the course before me.

"That is right," he said, "that is right; I like activity! You and your man can get to Cubzac to-night. I will write the letter for you at once; and if you can pick up another follower or two in your way to the camp, do not fail to do so, for the more men you carry with you, the warmer will be your welcome. Do not arm yourself till you get to Cubzac, for the good people here might stop you. You must then shape your course as you hear news of the army; but avoid Angoulême, for when I came by, some ten days ago, that neighbourhood was somewhat dangerous for a Protestant."

Of *course my thanks* were not wanting, and immedi-

ately after our arrival at the inn, he wrote the letter which he had promised; making no mention, indeed, of my never having served before, but simply telling the Prince de Condé, with whom he seemed on terms of great intimacy, who I was, and that the object I proposed was to raise a troop of adventurers, in order to harass the Catholic armies. He farther begged him, not only to give me a commission to the effect he proposed, but to point out to me the means of swelling my troop, and to afford me every assistance in so doing.

When this was finished, and the armour charged upon the servant's horse, I lost no time in mounting my own, and my new friend, shaking me as heartily by the hand as if we had known each other for years, bade me adieu, saying, that we should soon meet again at the camp. The landlord of the auberge and his drawers all bowed low as I came away, for I had paid whatever was asked, and, perhaps, had been more liberal to the attendants than some of the frequenters of the inn, not poorer than myself; and, with a heart considerably lightened, I rode away and quitted the city of Bordeaux.

My first sensations were those of joy and satisfaction at being no longer dependent upon the bounty of any one, but bent upon my way through the wide world, to win for myself honour and renown, and, as I trusted, high station and happy competence.

But, even while I was passing the ferry, those sensations began to change. I thought, with some regret, of the château of Blancford, of good old La Tour, of the two glad, light-hearted boys, who had been my companions for many a year, and of the sweet girl, whom I might never see again. A feeling of solitude came over me; and I do believe that it is impossible, even for him who has the lightest heart, the brightest hope, and the most enviable situation, to quit the scenes and the companions of his youth, without feeling as if he were left alone in the whole wide world, and without seeing before his eyes vague visions of the difficulties, dangers,

distresses, and griefs, which await every man who passes forth into active existence.

Such, at least, were my sensations, and, after landing, paying the ferryman his fare, and ascending the heights on the other side, I paused to look back over the scene that I was quitting, and a thousand bright and happy memories clinging to my heart, like children that would keep a parent from the wars, seemed to hold me to the spot with a force I could scarcely resist.

I thought of the condition of those that I had left behind; I saw the peaceful dwelling where I had spent so many years with but few of earth's discomforts, rendered the abode of contention, and sorrow, and discomfort; I fancied the grief of the two youths when they found that I was gone; I beheld the fair face of Louise bathed in tears, as she remained unprotected, and alone, and left to the guidance, the control, perhaps the tyranny, of a harsh bad woman. It was all painful—the thought almost unmanned me, and I would have given worlds to have rescued her from such a painful situation.

I felt that I must call up such images no longer; but still the form and face of Louise haunted me; and, at length, out of the darker and more gloomy thoughts that filled my brain, came forth a bright and lustrous hope—a hope on which I dared not let my mind rest: which was like the night vision of an angel to some lonely anchorite, too brilliant for the eye to gaze upon firmly, but yet full of joy and consolation and encouragement.

It was the first time that ever such a dream had suggested itself even to imagination. It was wild, it was foolish; but yet how sweet was the idea, that the time might come when, having, by the exertion of every power of mind and body, conquered the difficulties which surrounded me, swept away poverty and dependence, gained fame and honour and emolument, I might be enabled to snatch that sweet girl from the dark and hateful tyranny which I believed the rule of her mother's

rival must necessarily become, and to repay, in some degree, by kindness and tenderness and love for the child, the kindness and tenderness and love which had been shown to me by the mother.

But, almost in the very act of thus dreaming, there came upon me the memory of all that multitude of obstacles,—I might almost say of impossibilities,—which lay in the way to the fulfilment of such hopes. But I felt at the same time that, though it was only a fancy, it was a noble one; that though it was merely a wild aspiration after that which could not be, it was a high aspiration; one that might lead me to great attempts, if not to great deeds; one that would even guard me against low and debasing pursuits, that would elevate my purposes, and give object to my energies and exertions. I felt that such an object was holy and great, and I speak with reverence, when I say that it seemed to me then like the star which led the Magi from the East.

As this image rose upon my mind it soothed and it strengthened me, and I could gaze upon the city with its manifold towers and steeples reposing calmly in the rich purple light of evening, and upon the distant sloping grounds beyond, leading away towards Blancford, and on the wanderings of the bright Garonne, as, rolling down from Langon, it swept on by the city towards its meeting with the kindred stream, and on their joint progress to the ocean;—I could gaze, in short, upon all the natural objects which my eye had been accustomed to behold from childhood, without that deep feeling of regret on quitting them which I had experienced the moment before; and, as I turned my horse's rein to ride on, I murmured,—

"I shall see you all again, perhaps, with a lighter heart and a spirit more at rest."

The country was well known to me; for, during the last two or three years, I had made manifold excursions *from the château* in different directions; and now,

leaving the high road somewhat to the right, I took a bridle-path which conducted towards my place of rest for the night more rapidly, though somewhat more roughly, than the ordinary track.

Advancing somewhat quickly, for my charger was impatient of the bridle, I passed a man upon a small rugged horse, neither very fat nor very comely in its appearance, and apparently little able to carry him and the large package which he bore on the croup behind. When first I saw him he was trailing a spear along, with one end of the shaft describing a long zigzag line upon the road; but the sound of a horse's feet made him turn round rapidly, and his lance was brought into rest in a moment, in a way that bespoke no slight practice in charging a sudden enemy.

Whether on an occasion he might charge any one without much considering if it were enemy or friend I did not know at the time; but such things were very common in those days, though I think the worthy gentleman was somewhat too badly mounted to attempt the experiment upon me, even if I had been alone.

We passed, however, in all safety, with a "Good evening, seigneur," on the part of our fellow-traveller. I had only time, as I passed by, to remark that he was a tall raw-boned man, with a countenance which did not prepossess one very much in his favour. He was somewhat dirty in his clothing, and rugged in his person and appearance also, though there was a roguish twinkle in his eye which did not escape my attention, even in the slight glance I obtained.

In a short time after, I arrived at Cubzac; and rode straight to the inn, the hospitable doors of which showed themselves very willing to give me admission.

CHAPTER V.

WHEN I stood in the court-yard of the inn at Cubzac, and saw my armour and my valise unloaded from Andriot's horse, while the aubergiste waited to conduct me, with every appearance of reverence, towards the hall of general entertainment, a strange feeling suddenly came over me, from the recollection that it was not yet four-and-twenty hours since the arrival of the Baron de Blancford at his own château, that all I had done—the making of a new acquaintance, my dealings with the Jew, the purchase of horses and of arms, and a hundred little incidents, which appeared to me like the occupations of a life—had in reality occupied but a few hours. So it was, however; my whole fate and course of existence had been changed as by the stroke of a magician's wand, which had set me free in a moment from the state of indolent dependence in which I had been forced to remain, like one of the spirits in the old fables, imprisoned motionless in the heart of some knotted oak, and had sent me forth in a moment to active life and energetic exertion.

There was something ennobling, elevating, inspiring, in the feelings, very different from the sensations with which I had looked back upon the scenes I was leaving, from the northern bank of the Garonne. That all this had been accomplished in so short a space, gave me a sensation of power and energy; a confidence in myself, which I had before wanted; and in the calm and deliberate step and thoughtful air with which I followed the landlord into the auberge, no one I think could have discovered any trace of a mind as inexperienced as that of a mere boy.

The hall of the inn was a very spacious one; and a long table appeared in the middle, at the farther end of which I could just see, through the dim twilight of the evening, some seven or eight persons assembled round

what seemed a hasty supper. One of the servants of the inn, however, brought in lights almost immediately after I had entered; and it then became evident, that the party had just arrived from some long journey. There were two or three grave elderly men of respectable appearance, apparently tradesmen of some importance, or merchants. There was a good dame too of the same class, with two or three little girls of seven or eight years old, and one or two women servants; besides which, there was a youth of eighteen or nineteen, strong and well-made, scarcely tasting his supper, but sitting beside the rest, and resting thoughtfully with his head leaning on his hand.

Manifold were the caps and mantles which covered the whole party; and one would certainly have supposed, from the way in which they were wrapped up, that we were in the midst of winter, rather than in the warmest time of year. It often happened at that time, however, that such superabundant garments were adopted for the purpose of concealment; and I judged, and judged rightly, that these might be a party of wealthy traders, who, travelling through a disturbed country, and in dangerous times, chose to be recognized as little as possible, lest the report of wealth might draw upon them the attention of the plunderers with whom the country was overrun.

All their eyes had been turned upon me, as soon as I entered; the conversation they were carrying on ceased, and, as if for something to say, one of the elder men addressed the younger, saying,—

"Why do you not eat your supper, Martin? You are not sick, are you?"

"Not sick, uncle, but sorry," replied the lad.

"Pshaw! Thou art a whimsical boy," replied the elder man. "I can tell thee, however poor a trade thou mayest follow, it is richer than that of a soldier. Here is this gentleman coming in," he added, raising his eyes to me as *I stood* half-way up the table; "he looks

as if he knew something of arms, and I dare say will tell thee that to sell silk or linen, however little one may get, is better than fighting all day, watching all night, and having hard blows for one's only payment."

I laughed at his description of the soldier's life; and, as he addressed me first, replied at once, "I cannot think we are so badly off as that, my good sir. Every one knows his own taste; and, though certainly fortunes are rarely made by the sword, yet honour is gained, and glory, and frequently competence; and you must remember, there is not a noble family in the land which does not owe its elevation to the sword."

"That was in other days—that was in other days," said the elder man. "But I am right, then, in thinking you a soldier, sir?"

"I nodded my head, and was about to reply somewhat more fully, when Andriot entered the room, and whispered a word or two in my ear, which made me rise and go out, while the landlord busily put down my cover, and prepared to give me supper.

The intelligence which the lad brought me was simply, that the man with the spear, whom we had passed on the road, had come into the inn-yard, and finding him there, had asked him many questions concerning me. The good youth had been in one of his loquacious moods, and had given the interrogator more information than I thought right, telling him my name, and that I was a gentleman going to join the army. On this the other had immediately asked to speak with me, and I accordingly went out at once, in order to put my mind at ease with regard to the person in whose favour Andriot had shown himself so communicative.

I found him in the court-yard busy in unloading his beast, and examining the contents of the package that he had carried behind him, which proved to be a considerable store of very miscellaneous pieces of armour, both offensive and defensive. The cuirass was at that *moment on* the top, and from its condition left little

doubt that one of its possessors, at least, had seen some service, like itself; for not only did sundry hacks and dints betray the fact of many a close encounter, but a large round hole appeared to have been perforated, either by bullet or lance, on the right-hand side, near the arm-hole; and the gap was now curiously stopped up by means of a piece of thick leather, attached by nails driven through the iron, and clenched on the inside.

"Why, my good friend," I said, looking at the cuirass, and without taking any immediate notice of his message, "that piece of leather will never keep out anything."

"It will keep out anything I want it to keep out," replied the man, looking at me with a laugh.

"And what is that?" I demanded; "what is it you want it to keep out?"

"The wind," he replied; "for when the wind gets in between cold iron and an empty stomach a man gets melancholy, and has no appetite for dry blows. But I know what you mean—that sword, or bullet, or spear would go through it as easily as a skewer through a cock of the Indies; but there's not much chance of any other bullet finding out that place again—and if it did, no great matter, for it would meet with its fellow here, just lying between the ribs, under my armpit, and that would stop it from going any further."

"That is looking upon the matter rationally," I replied. "But now, my good friend, what is it that you wanted with me?"

"Why, simply this, seigneur," he replied; "finding that you are a soldier going to join the army, and having heard of your name a great many years ago as a very brave and gallant gentleman—"

"You must mean my father," I said, interrupting him; "my name you most likely have never heard."

"Ay, I dare say it was your father, now I look at you," he replied, "for you couldn't be much out of your

swaddling clothes at the time I talk of. However, I was going to propose, that you being travelling alone, or nearly so, and I alone, or, what's somewhat worse than alone, having nothing but a bad beast with me, which trots me five miles an hour, and thinks itself a miracle—I was going to propose, I say, that we should join company; for in these days we may fall in with friends and acquaintances by the way, where we shall find two right hands better than one. Besides, we may chance to fall in with some booty; and two dogs will always kill more game than twice one dog."

On the very face of the matter, the proposal was somewhat impudent, for at least my clothing, my horses, and I trust my appearance altogether, were those of a man of high birth; but when I came to look at my companion over more attentively by the twilight, which did not improve his appearance, it struck me as more impudent still. He was a person of about forty-five years of age, lean, long-limbed, thin-flanked, broad in the shoulders; with as unprepossessing a countenance as it was possible to imagine, and nothing on earth to redeem it from a sort of assassin-like expression, except a merry but somewhat sarcastic glance which occasionally came into his eyes, or rather into one of them, for it was the right eye only which had any movement; and I afterwards found that the left was made of glass, though a very good imitation of the other.

What might have been the original shape of his nose, I do not know, but a large cut across the bridge and down one cheek, seemed to indicate that its conformation had been somewhat violently changed into its present Socratic turn upwards.

His long grey hair, thin and ragged, his unwashed face, his untrimmed beard, all added to the sinister appearance of his countenance, and, in short, no one could look at him without doing him the same bitter injustice that I did him at that moment, and thinking *him as murderous* and rascally a person as it was possible

to set one's eyes on. Besides all this, his garments were anything but that which one would have desired in a friend and companion; for his buff jerkin, besides the rusty stains which had been left upon it after having been worn under ill-cleaned armour, was soiled and dirty in various other ways, and in more than one place patched with a piece of grey cloth.

He stood my survey quite quietly; and, indeed, the discrepant gaze of his two eyes rendered it somewhat difficult to tell whether he was looking full in my face or across the inn-yard on the other side. After having remained for about half a minute silent, however, he brought both eyes into a straight line, demanding, in a significant tone, "Am not I an ugly dog?"

"Yes," I replied, "you are. But you have made a little mistake, my good friend: I am not seeking companions, but raising a troop to serve under my command."

"Then I am the very man you want," he replied, "for I have experience, and you have none, that's clear enough; and I do not much care what I do, whether it be as a leader or follower, so that I do something."

"I don't think you would do much credit to my new troop," I replied, "unless you troubled the brook a little oftener, and gave the barber a sou at least once a month."

"Oh, that is easily remedied," said the adventurer; "I have no sous to spare, but I have ten fingers, bating one which was hacked off at the battle of St. Denis, which will do as well for me as any barber in Christendom; and then again, though water is not plenty in this hot weather, yet it is to be had. As to my jerkin, too, a couple of ounces of chalk, and the worth of a denier of yellow ochre, will put all that to rights: so that, if you like to have me, I will turn out to-morrow morning as smart a trooper as you'd wish to see. I cannot get rid of my face though, so you must make the best of that."

"*What religion* are you of?" I asked, wishing

to ascertain that point first, before I divulged my own.

"I don't know," he replied. "What is yours?"

There was a sort of quaint oddity about the fellow which amused me, and, I confess, made me think better of him, though I know not why, and I demanded, without answering his question, "Whom have you served under?"

"Two or three dozen," he answered; "but I have got my character written down for the benefit of those whom it may concern by a great many of my different friends, and I have not altered a word of their certificates; for it's useless for a man to try to change his nature, and it will come out sooner or later. Whom will you have?" he continued: "here is Martigues on the one side, and Andelot on the other. Here is Puygaillard, and Lossac, and Stuart, and—"

"Stay, stay," I said, "that will do. Let me see Martigues on the one side, and Stuart on the other."

"You are a 'cute bird, after all," he said; "you won't be limed, I see, to show yourself a Protestant or a Catholic. However, here are the papers."

And lifting up the flap of his jerkin, he drew from an inner pocket a number of dirty pieces of paper, of which he placed in my hands two, saying, "There they are."

The first I opened was in a strange hand, and it went on as follows:—

"This is to signify that Moric Endem is the greatest liar in Europe; but none the worse for that. He fights like a tiger, and will now and then obey his orders."

This was signed "Martigues," and the other, which I instantly recognized as the same handwriting wherein Stuart had given me a letter to the Prince de Condé, was much in the same strain.

"I hereby aver," it said, "that Moric Endem is better than he looks. He will stand by a friend or leader till the last; and has done so many brave things, that he is *a fool for bragging* of things that he never did."

I smiled as I read such account of my volunteer, but paused for a moment, to consider whether there was a possibility of my being deceived. Had I been still in the frame of mind in which I had set out that morning, I should have lost my opportunity, and rejected the offer of a man who afterwards proved of infinite use to me. But, as I have said, I had become somewhat more confident in myself by this time: Stuart's recommendation to increase my numbers as far as possible, had been strong; and therefore I determined to run the risk, as, in case of any malconduct on the part of my new follower, I and Andriot were at least two to one against him.

"And now Monsieur Moric Endem," I said, "which would you rather serve on, the Catholic or the Protestant side? Answer me fairly, for on the reply hangs all our proceedings."

"That is not a fair question," he cried, flinging down his cap on the ground with some vehemence. "That is not a fair question to a soldier of fortune. The matter, see you, is balanced pretty evenly, my young lord. With the Catholics there is pay and but little plunder, for the Protestants have nothing to lose. With the Protestants there is no pay, but plenty of plunder; for each Catholic, like a fool, comes with a fortune on his back. I have indeed a little hankering one way—"

"What then," I said, "do the Protestants give no pay?"

"By St. Geronimo," he cried, slapping his thigh, "you are a Catholic!—But no," he continued a moment after, "I remember quite well, Cerons was a Protestant, and so was his cousin, the Baron de Blancford. If you are the young lord, you are a Protestant too."

"Perhaps it may be so," I replied, in a low tone, but with a significant look.

"Well, then, I am your man," he said, without raising his voice; "for, to say sooth, I was born and bred a Protestant. But it is full thirty years since I thought of those *things;* and on my honour, I don't well know

what's the difference now. As to the rest, my young master, you must give me a crown to gild my hand; and you must give me and my horse something to eat, till we get to the army, at all events; for if I had not met with you this night, he and I would have shared supper; that is to say, he would have had the hay, and I the water; and to-morrow we might have been obliged to prove troublesome to any one we met upon the road. I declare, so help me Heaven! I have not seen a crown-piece for the last two months."

"I am nearly as poor as yourself, Moric," I said; "however, there is a crown for you, and now you are my follower; but I expect to see a change in your appearance by to-morrow; and you had better get your armour on your back, as I intend to do with mine, so that we may be well prepared for all things."

"You shall see a change, you shall see a change, sir," cried the man; "and I will help to fill your purse, as you have now helped to fill mine. I will get this crown changed directly into silver and billon, that it may feel heavy in my purse, and make me think of the days of old; for I have had many more crowns in my pocket, I dare say, than you have in yours now. But however—I don't know how it was—peace never lasted six months without finding me as poor as ever; the pockets grew empty, and the crowns went away, some to one slut, some to another, and the rest, as I have heard Stuart tell of an English Prince, were drowned in butts of malmsey or burgundy, as the case might be. But I will go and polish my armour, and patch my jacket, and wash my face, and trim my beard; and then I must try and get a new horse the first time I meet an enemy; though it is to be confessed, that on the back of that brute, there are ten chances to one against me."

While Moric Endem was speaking, the landlord came from the house to seek me, telling me that my supper *was not only* ready, but getting cold; and, leaving my

new follower to make the best arrangements for himself he could, I re-entered the hall of the inn.

I found the party that I had left there, concluding their supper; and they all looked at me as I sat down to mine, with a sort of shy and anxious, but yet not a reserved look; somewhat like that which a dog puts on, when he is willing to be familiar with us, but somewhat afraid of trusting to our kindness. The two elder men, however, and the elder lady, entered into conversation with me after a short time; and I saw evidently, that they were endeavouring to probe my character and feelings. Those, however, were sad days, when no one dared to trust to his neighbour; and I as little chose to confide my views or purposes to them, as they chose to put any trust or confidence in me.

The conversation, then, was merely general; I found that one of the elder merchants had travelled much, and had considerable information; and he seemed not a little surprised, to find that a young soldier could possess so much general knowledge as I had acquired, during my long period of study.

The younger people, too, began to draw nearer to me; and some little sportive jests, such as I would have used towards my cousins at Blancford, appeared completely to win their hearts; so that they were speedily clinging round me, playing with the tassels of my cloak or my sword-knot, and taking a thousand little liberties, for which they were, of course, gravely reproved by their elders.

The young man, who had been called Martin, however, sat silent and thoughtful for a long time; and, at length, only spoke to ask me some questions concerning the movements of the armies. The first words on that subject, however, seemed a signal for the party to break up: his uncle interrupting him immediately, by saying it was time to go to bed; and the whole then retired, wishing me good night, and a prosperous journey on the morrow.

Their reserved conduct was not explained till the following morning, when, on rising early, I saw them setting off from the court-yard; and the aubergiste, as inn-keepers generally do, came instantly to volunteer every information he possessed regarding the guests who were just gone.

"Ay, poor people," he said, "silly people they are. I told them they might trust to you, seigneur, and what a protection it would be to them to have you with them; for they are a party of rich merchants, as you might well see, sir, and doubtless have their pockets lined with many a good gold piece, so that they are afraid of all the bands of plunderers about, especially at the passages of the rivers."

"What religion are they of?" demanded I, nothing doubting they were Protestants, as the landlord himself was well known to be of my own creed.

To my astonishment, however, he answered that they were "poor misguided Catholics." "That is to say," he continued, "they are what people are beginning to call now-a-days, I hear, politics, which means people that are neither very much one thing nor the other. That eldest one is the well-known Paris merchant, Martin Vern, who has so much to do with the Jews and Lombards. I've a great notion he's a Protestant at heart; though his life, and all his goods, which he loves better than his life, would be in jeopardy every hour in Paris if he did not go to mass as regularly as the clock strikes the hour. It seems that young Martin, the nephew, had his father's promise to be made a soldier of; but the father died a month or so ago, which brought them all into this part of the country, and old Martin won't hear of the boy's taking to the sword. Yet I would stake my life that they are attacked before they get many miles further, and then they will find that young Martin's stout back and strong arm are both shield and sword for them. I hope, sir, we shall have *good news of* you at the army; but you might as well

have won a few gold pieces by the way for conducting three fat merchants safely. With what will you please to break your fast? It is not well to set out fasting, as they have done, and it's good twelve miles ere you get to Cavignac."

"I am not going to Cavignac, my good host," I replied, not choosing exactly to have my route settled for me.

"Ay, then," he answered, "you are going to Guitres, which is farther still; but in that case you'll have to pass the Saye low down, and I fear that all the rain which fell last night may have rendered the ford impassable. Besides all that, however, I heard that Lossac and his band were lying between St. Aulaye and Coutras, and it is even to be doubted whether he does not keep parties scouring the whole country up as far as Barbezieux, for he wants to prevent the bands from the South from joining our great Admiral and the Prince de Condé. So you had better take my advice and keep hard away to the west, though you do get amongst the sands, for you are not strong enough to do much against any of his people, and must e'en have recourse to what we call fox's strength, by which I mean cunning."

I thanked the aubergiste for his good information, which was indeed not a little important to me, for the armies of the Prince de Condé and the Duke of Montpensier were so placed that it was difficult for either to reach its resources, and no less for any one wishing to join the one, to avoid falling into the hands of the other.

The tidings I had received cast me into a momentary fit of musing; and the aubergiste, seeing the effect his words had produced, and at the same time having a strong desire that I should take my breakfast at his house, represented to me that, if I would but wait for half an hour, a courier from Angoulême would pass through Cubzac, and from him we could extract much information.

I agreed to his suggestion; and soon after the morning meal had been prepared, I heard the arrival of the courier himself, and learned that he had passed a small band of horse, whether troops of Lossac or not he could not tell. They amounted not to more than six or seven persons, he said, and were apparently moving back towards Cercon.

These tidings having been obtained, I had nothing further to detain me at Cubzac; and, paying the host his reckoning, I mounted to my chamber, clothed myself in my good suit of steel; and after calling loudly, but in vain, for Andriot, to make the rest of my goods and chattels into as small packages as possible, that they might be carried more easily, I descended to the courtyard, to see what had become of my young attendant and my new follower, the latter of whom I had not seen during the whole morning.

I found them together, behind some stables at the back of the auberge, chaffering with a sturdy farmer of the neighbourhood, in regard to a proposed exchange of Master Moric Endem's piece of lean cattle with a fine, fresh, sturdy, but rather vicious horse, belonging to the other. Moric had offered, it seems, to give his own horse, and all the remains of the crown which I had given him the day before, together with another crown that Andriot had lent him, for the more powerful and befitting charger which had been placed before his eyes. The farmer, however, stood out for another piece of money, and I was fain now to come forward and give it, though the price seemed to me somewhat exorbitant.* The horse that Moric already possessed was anything but fit for the journey; and, as he willingly agreed that I was to be considered the proprietor of the beast now

* It was in fact exorbitant; for we find that the Duke of Montpensier, himself holding the government of all these provinces, only gave a hundred *crowns* to each captain for raising a company of foot, and three hundred *crowns only* to the Maître de Camp of eight or ten companies thus raised.

purchased, it gave me a greater command over him than I might otherwise have obtained.

After all this was concluded, and the horse in his hands, I gave a glance towards my new follower's figure, and saw that it certainly was as much improved as his form and features would admit. The buff jerkin was now cleared from its rusty stains and spots of dirt, and was shining in the full freshness of chalk and yellow ochre. It seemed scarcely dry as yet, indeed; but that circumstance he did not appear to mind, and the plain steel cap with flying cheek-pieces, into which he had thrust his head, had been painted with a sort of Indian black since the night before, so as to look very smart, without offering a very shining or conspicuous point to the eye of a watchful enemy.

No other piece of armour had yet been put on, I suppose in order to give the buff jerkin time to dry; but when, after having told him to hasten his preparations for departure, I came down once more with Andriot to mount my horse, I found Master Moric armed from head to foot, with his cuirass also painted black: thus hiding, in a great measure, the unseemly patch upon his right side.

If I contemplated him with some attention, well pleased with the neatly-trimmed beard and well-washed face, he did not seem to regard me less narrowly or with less apparent pleasure, scanning all the pieces of my arms with an experienced eye, and rubbing his hands joyfully as he saw how easily they sat upon me. The ease with which I managed my horse, too, though the brute kicked and plunged most unmercifully on first being mounted, gave him no less satisfaction; and it was only upon Andriot that he bestowed some counsels and some reproof in regard to the unsoldierly manner in which he had put on his morion. When all was completed, we set out from Cubzac, and took our road onwards towards Barbezieux. As we went, Moric treated me with a large portion of his conversation, amusing by its quaint

drollery, but occasionally tiresome from touches of that rhodomontade whereof he had been accused. Were his own word to be believed, there was no great action which had been enacted during the last half century that he had not either absolutely performed himself or had a very considerable and important share therein. But he even went beyond that; and when he began telling a story of any one else, it very often happened that he entirely forgot, before he came to the end of his tale, the original hero with whom he set out, dropped the third person, took up the first, changed the person spoken of to himself, and performed all the last acts he had to relate in his own person.

The most ludicrous instance of this kind of transformation took place while he was giving me an account of the tournament at which King Henry II. had been killed, not many years before, and at which Moric had been present. He asserted that the fault which occasioned the death of the king, was entirely on the part of Montgomery; but, before he had finished his tale, he entirely forgot that declaration, got warm and heated with the subject, was seized with a peculiar sort of cupidity which induced him so constantly to appropriate the actions of others, and becoming Montgomery himself, described how he had killed the King of France, and explained with the utmost perspicuity and exactitude the eager feelings with which he had been animated, and which prevented him from recollecting in time, that it was necessary to throw away instantly the broken staff of his lance.

I could not help laughing at this absurdity, but he took it all in good part, laughed himself, and declared that it was every word true, except that he was the person who did it.

In many other respects, however, his conversation was full of interest. He was an old and veteran soldier, and full of information upon every practical point, both of military tactics, and military habits. As far as study

could render me acquainted with the subject, I was so already; but I gained more useful information from my new follower in a few hours, more directions for employing well the science that I had acquired, than I could have done from the best master of the art in weeks or months.

From him, too, I learned all the habits and manners of the camp, the rules, the regulations, the etiquettes, which I had before no notion of. What could and might be done, what could not be done, he told me; and I found that, constituted as armies at that period were—low in discipline, licentious in habits—with a little complaisance to the great leaders, and the observation of a few insignificant regulations, the captain of such a party as I proposed to raise might, in fact, do anything that he liked, and act totally independent of the General during almost the whole of the campaign, provided he showed himself daring and fearless, and ready to fight whenever he was called upon.

As we were conversing in this manner, while we pursued our onward way, we came to the high grounds near the little hamlet of Marceau, and, looking down over the country below, we saw a considerable number of people riding along, as if in great haste and confusion, upon the bank of the river; while at some distance to the right, another party appeared on the edge of the little slope, and the sun, glittering upon the arms of the latter, left no doubt whatever that they were troopers of some kind.

"Those are surely the poor merchants," I said, "who left Cubzac this morning."

"Ay," said the old soldier, "they are running away from those worthies on the hill—some of Lossac's people, I suppose. But the stupid fools have missed the ford. It is there—a hundred yards to the right, and they are running away from it. I know it as well as my own buff jerkin. They will get themselves caught and plundered, *if they don't* mind."

"Let us go down and help them," I exclaimed. "If you know the ford we can reach them before the others, and once having them across, we can turn and take a blow or two with the pursuers."

"Bravo! bravo, my captain!" cried Moric Endem. "That's the way! That's the way! It seems as if you had been born and bred to it! Always fight the enemy when he's not more than two to one! I am with you, my good captain!"

And spurring down the hill at all speed, we approached the party of merchants, who, terrified at seeing one body of troopers on their right, and another on the opposite side, paused and hesitated, till taking off my steel cap I waved it in the air, calling to them not to be afraid.

It seems that I was instantly recognised, for they stopped, and some advanced towards me, while, pointing with my hand toward the spot which Moric had indicated as the ford, I shouted to them to ride in that way with all speed.

People in a fright, however, never understand anything that is said to them, and they did not obey my directions till I reached them. Thus by the time we got them to the side of the river, and some of the horses into the water, the enemy was close upon us. The whole adventure seemed to me just like one of the military games which I had been accustomed to play with the old retainers, and my young cousins. Accompanied by Moric Endem and Andriot, I turned my horse upon the pursuers; the lad, Martin, rode up in a minute to my side; one of his uncles could not resist following, and by a sudden and unexpected charge we drove the enemy back, who paused for a moment's consideration before they attacked us again.

"Now, seigneur," cried Moric, "quick over the stream; for the river is coming down like fury, and in ten minutes more it will be impassable. We can easily keep the *opposite* bank when we are over."

I had remarked that the water was up to the ghrist

of the horses' saddles when the party of merchants passed, and, therefore, without more ado, I gave the necessary order for crossing the stream. We found that the little river Saye, like some of the others that flow into the Isle, being subject to a sudden increase, had become a complete torrent—in consequence of the rain which had fallen during the night—and that it was swelling every moment, coming down in large brown eddies, which nearly carried our horses off their feet. Andriot and the two merchants who had remained with us passed first, and I followed, thinking that my friend Moric was close behind me. But in charging the Catholics, one of their cavaliers had been struck to the ground, slightly wounded, near the bank of the stream, and Moric's fondness for plunder could not be restrained. The enemy's man-at-arms, indeed, had run away, but the horse had somehow got his feet entangled with the bridle, and remained very soberly lying on the ground.

Turning round, when I had half crossed the stream, I perceived my worthy follower busily employed in stripping the fallen horse, and I shouted to him that the enemy was upon him. He looked up, however, calculated the distance nicely, finished the operation of cutting the girths with his dagger, threw the rich saddle and its caparisons on the crupper of his own horse, sprang upon his beast's back in a moment, and plunged into the river, with the spears of the Catholics close at his horse's flanks. The water had risen even since I had passed; his horse was not quite so tall as mine, and for a few feet had to swim; but Moric Endem was never at all discomposed by any such little adventure, and keeping his spurs close to the horse's sides, brought him to land, not more than a few yards below the spot where the rest were standing.

The catholic band pursued him into the water, and one of them seemed inclined to follow his example in swimming; but Moric was by no means unprepared, and *snatching from* the miscellaneous crowd of arms

which surrounded his saddle a long horse-pistol, which fired with a flint and wheel, he took a deliberate aim at the pursuer's horse and shot him in the water. Though the wound was mortal, the horse, luckily for its rider, dashed out of the river again before it fell, and Moric, scarcely staying to mark the effect, proceeded calmly and quietly to examine the saddle which he had taken, to rip off the gold lace and velvet that covered it, and to extract from the lining of the bow some twenty gold pieces which were there stowed away for security.

Laughing at his prize, he rode up to us, and breaking in upon the expressions of gratitude which the merchants were pouring upon me, he pointed to the tops of a thick wood of sapins, which were seen at the distance of about two miles, saying,

"We had better ride on that way; for if these fellows see us remain talking here, they will go down to the bridge and pursue us out of very spite. If we set off for the wood at once, they will know that it is useless to follow, and we shall go on in quiet."

His advice was immediately attended to; and stopping on a little elevation before we reached the wood, we had the satisfaction of seeing that the enemy had given up the pursuit, and were slowly proceeding across the country in another direction.

CHAPTER VI.

It was not till we had placed several miles between us and the enemy, that the good merchants felt at all satisfied of their security; and they pursued their way with a degree of eagerness which soon brought us into the midst of the sandy tracks in the neighbourhood of Chepuiers. We then came to the banks of a little *stream, the* name of which I forget; and, as the women *and children* were now evidently much tired, I assured

good Master Vern that there was no farther danger from those who had attacked his party; and, dismounting from our horses upon the banks of the stream, we let the beasts crop the scanty herbage, while we prepared to repose and refresh ourselves from a good store of provisions which the traders had brought with them from the inn. The faces of the women and children were still somewhat pale, both from fear and fatigue, and Martin Vern and his companion looked grave and thoughtful, which I attributed to the risk their property had just run.

Young Martin, however, who had been as far forward in our little fray with the enemy as if he had been armed with steel from head to foot, looked not a little proud of his exploits, especially as somehow, I do not very well know how, he had got a sharp gash upon the forehead, which bled a little, and promised to leave a military mark upon him that he was not likely easily to get rid of. Seeing the two elder merchants standing apart, busily talking to each other, I advanced to the young man, and, shaking hands with him, complimented him highly upon his courage and promptitude. He grasped my hand again, but said nothing that was audible, while the colour came up bright into his cheek, and he looked confused as well as gratified.

Ere I had well concluded what I had to say, however, Master Vern and his companion came up; and the former took my hand, saying, "Permit me to touch your hand, seigneur, and to offer you my very best thanks for saving us all this day. The landlord of the inn at Cubzac informed us in the morning that we might well trust to you; but we poor merchants going on business from one part of the kingdom to another, are forced in these troublous times to be so careful that sometimes prudence acts the part of imprudence, and by refusing to trust when we ought, we do ourselves as much harm as by trusting when we ought not."

Not knowing very well where his harangue was about

to lead him, and never having been particularly fond of thanks of any kind, I took the first opportunity of replying that what I had done was a mere nothing, a piece of common humanity; and I added, laughing, "To-day's adventure, good sir, should teach you Catholics to treat us poor Protestants somewhat better than you do; for here you have been attacked though unarmed, and would doubtless have been plundered by your own party, while you have been defended by Protestants only because you were unoffending people."

"Oh, sir," said both the merchants at once, "we are not the sort of Catholics you take us for. We look upon the Protestants just as much like brethren as they do each other. We see no reason why any man should be condemned for worshipping God in his own way."

"There are many sorts of Catholics in France, sir," continued Martin Vern, "and those who call us politics well deserve the name themselves, for their religion is all a matter of politics together. But, however, we are no enemies to the Protestants; for I am even now going to the camp of the Prince de Condé to treat with him on my own part, and that of my good friend, Solomon Ahar, concerning some stores and other matters that he requires."

"Indeed!" I said, with some surprise, "then I am certainly the more glad that I have rendered you this little service."

"The Prince de Condé will be glad, too, sir," replied the merchant; "and I shall take care that he knows to whom it is owing. I think the aubergiste told me your name was Monsieur Cerons. But all mere professions of gratitude I know are vain; and my companion and myself have agreed to beg your acceptance of this purse of fifty crowns for the service that you have already rendered us, promising you the same sum if you will kindly conduct us in safety to the camp of the Prince."

Heaven knows that I was as poor as might be, that *I calculated* upon my sword as my sole means of fortune,

and that I could never have gained any little sum in a more honest or honourable way. But yet it went against me to take the man's money, and I had to think two or three times before I could bring myself to resolve upon so doing. The merchant saw my situation; and, not knowing how inexperienced I was in such matters, attributed it to a wrong cause.

"We would offer you more, sir," he said; "but the fact is, the speculation on which we are going is a very uncertain one. We cannot gain much, but we may lose much. Otherwise—"

"Think not of that, think not of that," I said; "I was only hesitating whether I should take your money at all. Nor would I do so, but the fact is I am but a soldier of fortune, Monsieur Vern, and am now trying to raise a troop with but small means of doing so. If I take the money at all, therefore, it is for the purpose of increasing my numbers as I go along, which will add to your own security. Of the fifty pieces that you offer me I shall give ten to each of the men, and will employ the other thirty in recruiting, if I can meet with any likely men either at Jonzac or Barbezieux. The other fifty will depend upon whether we guide you well and rightly, and that I shall take without hesitation, as that to which I feel some right."

"You shall have deep thanks and gratitude into the bargain," replied the merchant; "and, although you gentlemen of the sword do not value much the good-will or services of us traders, occasions do happen sometimes when, according to the old fable, the mouse can help the lion."

He held the purse in his hand, and certainly his words were well calculated to make the acceptance of it palatable to me: yet I felt my cheek grow hot as I took it, and I looked round towards the women and children and the rest of the party, as if to see whether they were looking at me.

In *the mean while* Andriot and Moric Endem were

aiding the merchant's wife and the women servants to lay out the provisions upon the banks of the stream; and, with all the facility of an old soldier, Moric had cast down his steel cap, and was busily arranging the whole, with many a dry jest and merry look and careless laughter, which made the women and the children soon forget the terror that had seized them, and prevented them even from perceiving the extraordinary ugliness of their gallant defender. A huge cold capon, which he instantly christened "Monseigneur," was placed in the midst of the little circle; manifold eggs were arranged neatly around; various stores of salted provisions, tongues, lard, and sausages were spread out by his hands, with more taste than one might have expected, and at length came two huge bottles of wine, which he called the king and queen, with various other things, for each of which he had a name.

As we all took our places around, however, it was discovered suddenly that the eggs, which were to form no inconsiderable part of the meal, had not been cooked.

"We could soon cook them," cried Andriot, "for there's wood enough in the neighbourhood; but where are we to find wherewithal to cook them in?"

"You get the wood, you get the wood, 'scapegrace," cried Moric; "run up the hill, and get the wood. You show how long you have been a soldier. Don't you know that every man-at-arms carries a kettle on his head, and a frying-pan on his stomach? Get you gone, and come back speedily, and leave the cooking to me."

"Now, we will put him in a fright for his polished morion," continued Moric, after the youth was gone, at the same time collecting some dry sticks and grass that lay about, and striking a light. "Susanne, my pretty one," he continued, to one of the little girls, "I see some branches lying there; go and fetch them, while I blow the fire up."

And using his mouth for a pair of bellows, he had contrived to kindle a strong flame by the time that

Andriot and the girl had returned. "Now, Andriot," he went on, "take off your morion, there's a good youth; fill it with water out of the stream, and you shall see that we will boil the eggs in a minute."

"Had I not better take yours, Master Moric?" said the young man, looking somewhat ruefully at him.

Moric burst into a shout of laughter, in which all the rest of the party joined. "Come, come," cried Moric, "since thou art stingy of thy morion, Andriot, we will roast the eggs, though it is a difficult task, and not to be undertaken by any but an old woman or an old soldier.

'There's an art in roasting of eggs, there's an art in roasting of eggs;
And he who would run before he can walk, must first learn to use his legs.'"

Thus sung Moric Endem in a tolerably good voice, as he laid the eggs in order amongst the hot wood-ashes: and there was something so contagious in the gay, careless merriment which my new follower displayed, that I never beheld a meal pass more cheerfully than did ours of that day, by the banks of the little stream. Moric's eggs proved to be excellent, and of the wine, which was excellent also, he was permitted, in recompense, to have his full share. It had no perceptible effect upon him, however; more cheerful it could not make him, and his head was a great deal too well seasoned to the juice of the grape, for his faculties to be disturbed by it.

Before we rose to go on our way, I produced the purse which I had received from the merchant, and bestowed ten crowns from it upon the old soldier, with the like sum upon Andriot. The eyes of both glistened not a little at the treasure they had so rapidly acquired, and Moric starting up, drew me on one side, saying,

"That puts me in mind of something. Now, monseigneur, I have got some plunder you know to divide, which came out of that fellow's saddle. We have said nothing yet about the way we intend to divide it; but I tell you *what I saw* tried in the last war, and which is

the best plan; namely, this: that every thing which is brought in is given up to the captain. Every week it is divided amongst the whole band, the number of lots being just one more than the band, including the captain. He has two lots, and every other man one. That makes each man do his best for the whole, and see that others do the best too; and the captain, who has a great many things to pay, and to do for us all, has something to do it with, and a little more. Ransoms, however, and compositions, and such things, are, of course, regulated differently, according to the laws of arms, and each man keeps his own. Also, of any plunder taken in a general battle, you know, a part goes to the leader whose cornet we fight under; but only be sure in making terms with the general, that you get his authority for dealing with your own men according to your own way, and bind yourself as little as you can to the laws and regulations of other people."

"Somewhat freebooting advice, Master Moric," I replied, "though not bad in some respects. But, nevertheless, you must remember that I have honour and glory to gain, and to make a name for my band too, as well as to acquire money and plunder."

"The one's the way to do the other," replied Moric. "Your way to get honour and renown for yourself and your band, is to fight like a lion, and make your men fight, and depend upon it, every one fights ten times as well when he thinks he is to get something for it, as when he thinks that every thing he takes is to be shared with the whole army."

There was some reason in what the man said, and I then proceeded to consult him in regard to obtaining some new recruits as speedily as possible.

"Oh! we shall find some at Jonzac," he said, "no doubt of it! The people are arming all over the country, and few have yet taken service with any one. All the daring fellows that are ready to eat fire and brimstone served *up hot* out of a cannon's mouth, will choose some free

band such as ours, depend upon it, and we shall have our share, though it's a pity you are not better known amongst the old soldiers. However, my face will do you some good. People don't forget it when once they have seen it, and the task of guarding these merchants will have its effect too; for the men will think that there's something to be gained at least, which is true too."

"Why, for that matter," I said, "you may give each known man that you can meet with, a couple of crowns as earnest, and promise them two more at the end of our journey."

"Then we are safe enough; then we are safe enough!" cried Moric. "We shall have plenty of men, depend upon it, and good men too. There's nothing like a bird in the hand—one of these yellow birds I mean. Why, four crowns certain, to begin with! Four golden crowns! That is enough to buy a Protestant count or a Catholic archbishop at any time. But we had better not increase the band too much at first, sir; for if you go with too many, you will either not have room for many of the best men that we find straying about the camp, or else you'll have the band so large that some one of the leaders will be for having you under his command altogether."

"Why, from your account, Moric," I said, "it seems to me that every one does very much what he likes in the camp, whether he be under command or not."

"There's some truth in that, sir," replied the man. "There's much truth in that. Every man in the Protestant army does what he likes; for, receiving no pay from any one (but such as some of the lords give their own men), no one has right to say to another, Do this or do that; and it only happens every now and then, that this sweet prince, or that charming general, hangs one or two of his beloved volunteers, just to prove that his authority is what it is not, and that he has some power when, in reality, he has none. Then, amongst the Catholics, it is even worse; for though they have

the right and the power too, if they choose to exert it, yet every lord has his own will and his own way; and, from the King down to the valet, every one is afraid of offending the man below him, and driving him to sing psalms in French instead of in Latin. But, at the same time, it is just as well to have good authority for what one does; and a man who comes fresh to offer his services, with ten or a dozen stout troopers at his back, may make what bargain he likes; and the best bargain is the freest."

While this conversation, and some more of a similar nature, was carried on between myself and Moric Endem, the merchants and their train were preparing to pursue their journey, saddling their beasts, gathering together various portions of their goods and chattels, which had been unpacked to arrive at the provisions, and placing the women and children on the horses destined to carry them.

I and my two followers mounted speedily to accompany them; and, when everything was ready, we set out together, I entering now into my first employ in arms, as the guard and protector of a party of rich merchants. I believe I fulfilled the task pretty well, and did not suffer my inexperience to appear, at least to the eyes of any but Moric Endem. He, however, in the presence of our new companions, showed the utmost deference to his leader; and a little incident which happened at Jonzac, tended, perhaps, to increase his respect, full as much as the promptitude with which I had turned upon the enemy in the morning.

We had arrived towards nightfall; and, sitting down in the public room of the inn, as usual, found at the other end of the table a somewhat noisy and excited party of soldiery; that little town being then entirely in the hands of the Protestants, and the inhabitants being very generally arming to support the Admiral and the Prince de Condé. Those who were at the end of *the table* were evidently raw to the service, and of the

very useful class of *pedescaux*, or foot soldiers, and one or two of them seemed to have drunk a sufficient quantity of wine to make them insolent. Taking upon myself the place that my rank, both as a gentleman and as the leader of the whole party entitled me to, I advanced at once to the top of the table, and, placing myself there, arranged the merchants and their families on either side; and, to guard as well as possible against any annoyance, I told Moric Endem to place himself at the end of the line on one side, and Andriot on the other.

My precaution proved not in vain; for, after eyeing us for a few moments, the conversation of the soldiery at the other end of the table evidently turned upon us, and a great deal of laughter and jesting took place, which made the colour come and go in the merchants' cheeks. We had fallen well upon the hour of supper, so that the last meal of the day was speedily set before us: but the laughing of the other guests became more loud than before, and it seemed that some of the elder and more experienced were busily engaged in instigating a heavy-looking, burly youth, of twenty or one-and-twenty, to do something to insult or annoy us.

At length I distinctly heard the words, "You dare not!" and the reply, "I dare!" And, at the same time, the young man pushed the settle from behind him, and walked up to the part of the table where we were sitting. The women looked terrified behind them; but the man, without saying anything to any one, stooped over and lifted a dish, as yet untouched, from before Martin Vern. Moric Endem, who was on the other side, was instantly starting up; but I exclaimed, in a tone of authority, "Sit down, Moric Endem!"

"As you please, monseigneur," replied the man.

"Put down that dish instantly!" I said to the young man, who looked somewhat aghast, either at his own daring, or at the "Monseigneur" which Moric Endem had given me. I was rising as I spoke, but the man hesitated, while a loud laugh, evidently at his expense, burst *from his fellows below*.

"Put down that dish!" I exclaimed again, in a voice that made the hall echo; and as he did not instantly obey, I struck him a single blow on the side of the head, which, coming from an arm well practised, and not particularly weak, stretched him at full-length upon the floor, with sauces and condiments floating round him. It luckily so happened that the aubergiste himself was in the room at the moment; and, taking instant advantage of the dead silence that ensued, I said, in as calm a tone as possible, "Landlord, bring in another dish, and charge that which is on the floor to those persons who are at the other end of the table."

"Certainly, monseigneur! certainly!" replied the aubergiste, impressed as much as I could desire by what had taken place; and I quietly returned to my place, and proceeded in carving the boiled beef, in the distribution of which I had been interrupted.

In the mean while my fallen friend raised himself up, glanced at me for a moment with uncertain rage, of which I took not the slightest notice, and then, returning to his companions, spoke a word or two, sullenly, to them. They laughed, but in a much lower tone than before; and a brief and muttered consultation seemed to be held, while the landlord brought in a new dish, and deposited it before Martin Vern. As the landlord passed them, however, one of the party beckoned him up and asked him something in a whisper, and I could then hear my own name passing from mouth to mouth, with various additions and improvements, at the fancy of the retailers, as "The Seigneur de Cerons!" "The Count de Cerons!" "The celebrated Count de Cerons!" "The Seigneur de Cerons, Colonel-General of the Infantry!"

It was clear, however, that the whole party—whether these additions had been made by the magnifying powers of Moric Endem, when he announced my name to the host, or not—it was clear that the whole party, even *now*, determined to look upon me as a very great man,

and to make that an excuse to themselves for sneaking away without taking any farther notice of the chastisement inflicted on their companion. Accordingly, after hesitating and looking doubtful, and whispering for several minutes more, one by one, they disappeared through the doorway, and we were left in possession of the hall to discuss our supper in tranquillity.

I should not have mentioned the subject at all in conversation with my companions; but both Martin Vern and his nephew talked of it, laughing, as soon as the others were gone; and while they loaded me with thanks and praises, made many a shrewd and jesting comment upon the pusillanimity of the departed. The affair had another effect, however, for the landlord's voice was heard several times, without, talking loud to different persons; and, from two or three words that could be distinguished, I found that he was thus loud in my praise. When, at length, he was putting some dessert upon the table before us, he spoke to me in a whisper, saying, "that there were, without, two or three gentlemen who had served in the last war, who had taken arms again, and were very anxious to know whether I could and would receive them into my company?"

I replied, "that I could not leave the party I was escorting, but that I would send my lieutenant, by which sonorous name I dignified good Moric Endem, to speak with them at once; preferring in such a case to trust to his judgment rather than to my own. The result was that he engaged for me five as stout fellows as ever were seen, of whom he had known something in the preceding wars, and who also had the advantage of coming to me with horses, arms, and accoutrements all complete. The whole of this was settled during that evening, and the joy and satisfaction which I myself might feel at my growing importance, was far outdone by that of good Martin Vern and his companions, who now thought themselves perfectly competent to encounter any Catholic force in the neighbourhood. Two more, but not

exactly of such good stuff, were added to our number at Barbezieux, and thus forming a troop of ten men, we advanced on the road to Angoulême, as far, or perhaps farther, than it was prudent so to do.

We had heard that the Prince de Condé and the rest were at that time at the town of Sainctes; but a few miles on the other side of Barbezieux, we learned that the army had marched in a different direction, and, apparently, quitted the Charente. News, too, was here received that the Catholic garrison of St. Jean d'Angely had sent out considerable detachments into the country on the side of Pons; while light-armed troops from Angoulême were scouring the country in every direction, for the purpose, it was supposed, of supplying the city in case of siege.

In conversing over these affairs, which certainly bore a somewhat menacing aspect, with Martin Vern, I found that he was determined to proceed with his nephew and his partner to the camp of the Prince de Condé, but was in a state of very considerable alarm on account of his wife and children. Under these circumstances, I advised him strongly to despatch messengers to the Duke of Montpensier, who was at that time, we understood, at St. Junien, in order to demand a safe conduct for his family, which I knew would immediately be given on his declaring them to be all Catholics. He seized at the proposal eagerly; a messenger was easily found, and set out with directions to pass on the other side of Angoulême on his return, and to meet us at Cognac; whither we now bent our steps with slow and cautious journeys. Cognac we found in the hands of a small Protestant force, and we then first learned that the siege of Angoulême by the Prince de Condé had actually begun.

The rest of our journey would have been easily completed, even without the safe conduct; but as Martin Vern was aware that he should have to return to *Bordeaux* himself at all events, he judged it best to wait

for the safe conduct in the suburb of Cognac, and to send the women of his party on at once to Paris, as it was impossible to say what turn the war might take.

Though the Protestant force at Cognac would not admit my soldiery within the limits of their little garrison, I there made the acquaintance of several officers and gentlemen attached to the cause of freedom, and made myself still farther acquainted practically with the habits of a camp and an army. I had now under my command several good and experienced soldiers, but Moric Endem was still my chief adviser, and I was glad to find myself justified to the full, in having trusted him so far, by the opinions and commendation of all the military men with whom I was now brought in contact. Every one laughed when his name was mentioned, but every one also declared that he was as brave as a lion, and might with safety be trusted by those who chose to trust him fully. Those who chose to show him, on the contrary, either unkindness, or want of confidence, would need, they said, the eyes of Argus to prevent the old soldier from finding some means of retribution. The short time we spent at Cognac gave me an opportunity also of becoming more thoroughly acquainted with my men, and of making them generally aware of my views and purposes.

At length, with the interval of one day, the safe conduct arrived, and, with many embraces and some tears, good Martin Vern saw his wife and children depart for Paris. An hour or two after they were gone, we ourselves commenced our march; and just as evening was setting in, saw the high hill of Angoulême rising above the lesser slopes that border the Charente.

CHAPTER VII.

It was night when we reached the outposts of the Prince de Condé's camp, and we were stopped by a small body of soldiers who demanded the sign, which of course we could not give. Our errand was soon explained, however, and we were led on into the camp, which was neither entrenched, nor defended in any other way. It presented a gay mixed scene, where little regularity of any kind existed, till once one had passed the skirts of the camp, where plenty of disorder was going on. My followers were left at the second guard, while I and the merchants on foot, were led through canvass streets and squares, formed by long lines of tents, to the spot where the pavilion of the Prince de Condé was pitched. Though certainly not a very convenient dwelling, it was divided into two chambers, if not three, and we were detained in the outer one while the Prince was informed of our arrival.

The pride of arms and of birth made me imagine that I should be called to his presence immediately, though we found he was at supper. But I was disappointed, for the merchants were much more important people at that moment in the eye of the Prince, than any small leader like myself, and they were ushered in very soon, while I remained without, talking with one of the Prince's attendants, who remained sitting with me, as if it were in the ante-chamber.

The conference of the Protestant leader with the merchants seemed interminably long, and the occasional laughter and merriment that I heard made me think that the conversation was protracted after all real business was over. At length, however, they came out, and I was summoned to the presence of the Prince, while Martin Vern, in passing, said, "We will wait for you *here.*"

I found the Prince seated still at supper, with a man considerably older than himself, though yet in the prime of life. His countenance was remarkably handsome, far more so, indeed, than his figure, and there was in his eyes that sort of sparkling impetuosity which well indicated the character of the man. He received me with a smiling countenance, and made me take a seat near him.

"It is always pleasant, Monsieur de Cerons," he said, "to receive new friends and companions; but still more pleasant to receive one who bears back to our camp an illustrious name which has been too long banished from the roll of arms. I take it for granted I speak to the son of that Monsieur de Cerons who just twenty years ago distinguished himself in the attack upon the forts at Boulogne, and, to the regret of the whole army, fell upon the occasion. I grieve to say that I knew little of him, for that was my first campaign, and I was not worthy of the notice of so distinguished a soldier; but my friend, Monsieur d'Andelot, here, was his companion in many a well-fought field."

"I was indeed, young gentleman," said D'Andelot, "and I must say a better soldier or a braver man never existed. You are very like him, and I trust are as like him in character as you are in person."

"It is with the hope of proving that, sir, that I come here," I replied; and judging it more respectful to the distinguished officers with whom I was speaking to say as little as possible, I ceased there.

"I doubt not that you will completely fill his place amongst us," replied the Prince, after a moment's thought. "Indeed, Monsieur de Cerons, we have every reason to believe so from the account these good merchants have given us of your conduct on the road. You do not know what an obligation you have laid upon us by bringing them safely hither; for, on my faith and honour, I think, without their help, we should not have been able to carry on the campaign: for though every one here *fights for* good-will, yet men must have food,

9200

and cannons and arquebuses are poor contrivances without powder and shot. These merchants tell us you have a troop with you, Monsieur de Cerons?"

I evidently saw that it was the design of the Prince to give me notice, in a quiet and passing manner, that I was to expect no pay for my services, and at the same time to ascertain with what views and purposes I came.

"My troop is not a large one, my lord," I replied; "at present it comprises but ten men. They are all, however, stout men at arms, and have some experience; and I hope to increase my troop to double that number. It is fit, my lord, however, that I should tell you that my father left nothing but his sword; and it is needful, to myself, that I should raise myself by arms, and, to my men, that I should be enabled to maintain them by the sword."

"Ay," replied the Prince, "I understand—make the horse feed the horse. But it is somewhat difficult to know what to do. We cannot and must not drive away such bands as yours, especially when led by such a gentleman as yourself. As little can we expect them to range themselves under any regular leader, when we have no pay whatever to give them; and yet it is absolutely necessary that both I myself and Monsieur de Coligny should put a stop to everything like indiscriminate plunder. Were we not to do so, we should soon have the whole country rising upon us."

"I am not one, my lord," I replied, "to wish that it should be otherwise. All I desire is, that, in order to keep my men together, I may have, as it were, a detached command of my own people under your highness's commission, in order that, by fair war against the enemy in arms, I may be enabled to maintain my troop and advance myself. Neither the threshold of the cottage, nor the hearth of the citizen, shall ever be invaded by my troopers. I only want permission to attack the *enemy* whenever I can find occasion, and to cut off

from him, as my legitimate prize, whatever I can meet with."

"That is soon granted," replied the Prince de Condé, "if we understand each other rightly. But what is that in your hand, Monsieur de Cerons? It seems a letter."

"I had forgotten it, my lord," I said; "it is one addressed to your highness,—on my behalf, I believe."

The Prince took and read it, and then turning, with a smile, to D'Andelot, he said, "We shall have Stuart with us in less than ten days; and he does more service, you know, than any ten besides.—Now, Monsieur de Cerons, my friend Stuart here has explained all your plans more clearly than yourself; and indeed it is not always so easy to explain one's self as to let another do it. I fear very much, however, that you have attached yourself to the wrong side of the question, as far as obtaining wealth, at least, is concerned. You shall have, however, what seamen, I believe, call a roving commission, and on the following terms, remember: During all marches, countermarches, and on general service, you shall have the opportunity allowed you of doing as you please. At other times, such as the eve of a general battle, the assault of a town, or any similar operation, you shall render yourself into the camp on due notice. In short, any special order given to you, by me or by the Admiral de Coligny, you shall obey as strictly as any other soldier; but at the times when you are without any such orders, you shall not be called to account for anything you do at your own hand, with these provisoes, that you shall neither commit, nor suffer to be committed by your people, any outrage upon or pillage of the peasantry of the country; that you shall neither exact contributions from villages or hamlets, or places friendly or unarmed, nor permit any plunder in towns taken by capitulation; and, in fact, shall only wage honourable war against enemies with arms in their hands. *Nor shall you* receive money called pati, or

sufferance, from any persons whatsoever. On these conditions, all prizes whatsoever, captured by yourself, shall be at your own disposal, without claim or intervention from any person. This is all that can be done for you, and if it suits you it shall be done."

"It suits me perfectly, my lord," I replied; "I require nothing more; and, as far as in me lies, will never be absent from my post when my services may be wanted."

Some further conversation ensued between the Prince, D'Andelot, and myself, in which a great many other matters were settled with regard to my lodging in the camp, &c.; and, sending for his secretary, the Prince de Condé gave orders for the commission to be drawn up, which was immediately done, giving me authority to raise a company of fifty men, and embodying all the stipulations contained above.

As soon as I had received it I rose to depart; but D'Andelot, after whispering for a moment to the Prince, said, "It always gives an officer great honour, Monsieur de Cerons, to begin his career in any new service with some brilliant exploit. Now, we propose to-morrow to attack the breach at Angoulême, which has been made by our batteries yesterday and to-day. The leading of this assault, indeed, has been given to Monsieur de Genissac; but we have no doubt that he will suffer you to be his companion, if you choose to mount the breach amongst the first, along with your men. The breach is in the wall of what is called the Park; but we will send Genissac to you in the course of to-morrow morning. You will be supported by the regiment of Monsieur de Corbouson, and you are to remember to obey promptly the orders you receive from thence."

It may well be supposed that, eager as I was to distinguish myself, I caught at the offer without hesitation. In this instance, I had not the slightest fears in regard to my own inexperience, for I knew that I had nothing to do but to fight with courage and determination; and,

having ascertained the hour that the assault was likely to take place, I retired to seek my quarters, which were assigned to me in one of the little suburbs of the town, as I had informed the Prince that I had yet no tents with me.

In the ante-room I found the worthy merchants, and with them returned to the spot where I had left my men. As we went, Martin Vern informed me that he was to go back to Bordeaux early on the following morning, and asked if he could execute any commission for me in that city, from which he intended to return again in ten or twelve days. He said nothing more at that time, but accompanied me to the little auberge in the suburb, after I had lodged my men as I had been directed, and had given some directions to Moric Endem. I found the hall of the inn, as may well be conceived, a scene of confusion almost indescribable. At first it seemed to me that everybody was talking, everybody was singing, everybody was drinking, and everybody was snuffing the candles, at the same time. Eyes swimming with excitement or dropping with sleepiness, faces heated and flushed with drink, mouths wide open with oaths, vociferations, or songs, and outstretched arms crossing each other in various directions, were to be seen on every side, while the din and uproar were absolutely deafening.

The scene did not seem to strike the merchants as much as it did me; but Martin Vern turned out of the room again, almost as soon as he had entered it, saying, "We shall doubtless find less confusion somewhere else;" and, after looking into the kitchen, in the hopes that, protected by the awful genius of the culinary art, that place might be found somewhat more quiet, he mounted the stairs, and walked from bedroom to bedroom, which had all been turned into eating or drinking rooms, and which were, in most instances, crammed to the very doors.

At length we came to one large room, which might

contain perhaps twenty people, ranged at different tables, and enjoying themselves more soberly. The secret of this was, that the tenants were all officers, and the common soldiery judged it more expedient to pursue their potations in other rooms. The officers, too, might perhaps themselves desire a little quiet, and I remarked that several of them looked up and scanned us closely, as if to satisfy themselves that the intruders were likely to be more tranquil and orderly than the parties assembled in other places.

There was one table vacant, near a window, at the very farther end of the room, and at that we seated ourselves, glad to be as far as possible from the general roar that rushed up the stairs and through the passages. A boy, who was running from table to table with the activity of a marmoset, came up to inquire what we wished for supper; and as soon as he had left us, Master Vern leant across the table, and asked me,—

"Now, Monsieur de Cerons, have you no commands for Bordeaux? for I have many things to do, and perhaps may not have the opportunity of speaking to you to-morrow."

After thinking for a moment or two, I replied that I feared there was no commission that I could give; that I longed indeed to hear of my relations at the château de Blancford, but did not know how to compass it.

"That is easily done, Monsieur de Cerons," said the merchant; "I am going to the château de Blancford myself. There is scarcely a noble in the land that we merchants have not something to do with. The Baron must have reached the château by this time, for he was to leave Paris in three weeks after we did.—Come, come, Monsieur de Cerons," he said, seeing that I hesitated, "I have many a time remarked, since you were with us, that something weighs upon your mind. We owe you a great deal, not only for good service, but for kindness. Sit down and write a few lines to your friends, and we *will find* means that you shall have an answer. Relieve

your mind, my friend; relieve your mind by words. Depend upon it the best remedy for a heavy heart is to cast off part of the load upon paper."

"But I have no means of writing here," I said, "and fear it will be difficult to procure them."

"What! a merchant without paper and ink?" cried Martin Vern, opening a pocket in the lining of his cloak, and taking out all the requisites: "that would never do. There, Monsieur de Cerons, write, write, and I will take care it shall reach its address."

I took the paper and pen that he gave me, and with the first impulse of my heart wrote a few lines to my sweet cousin, Louise. The terms in which I spoke were precisely such as I should have used before my departure. I bade her not forget me, nor the affection which had existed between us ever since our childhood. I bade her recall me to the remembrance of her brothers and La Tour. I told her that I should never forget or cease to love her and them, and I assured her that nothing but absolute necessity and the fear of giving them all bitter pain would have led me to quit them without bidding them adieu, as I had done. This brought me to speak of my situation at the time, and I told her that I had met with much greater success than I could have expected; that I was already at the head of a small band; and that I was to lead, in company with another, the assault upon Angoulême on the following morning. A few words of affection and kindness succeeded, and, having folded and sealed the letter, I put the address upon it, and gave it into the hands of Martin Vern.

He looked at the address, and when he saw the name, a sober and somewhat melancholy smile came over his face, and putting it up carefully, he said, "It shall go safe."

Shortly after this, the head of Moric Endem made its appearance at the door, and seeing me seated at the opposite *table,* he entered the room, and came across

towards me. Ere he had proceeded half-way to the table, however, three or four of the officers who were dining at the different tables around started up, and one of them exclaimed, "Why, Moric Endem! What! you, old comrade! is it you come back to join us? and looking fat and well-feathered too!"

"Ay, my good friends; ay, ay," said Moric, "here I am; but I am in leading-strings, my boys; I am in leading-strings. I'm baby Moric now, and there's my nurse—my captain, I mean to say; so I must go and speak to him, for I have a word for his ear."

"If he seeks to fill his purse," said one, looking at me across the room, "you're the man for him; for you could always fill a purse, but never keep one."

"Too true, good friend, too true," replied Moric, advancing towards me; "but I will do better this time."

They all shook their heads, however, with a laugh; and Moric came on and sat down beside me. He had lost no time in pursuing his avocations, and informed me that he had already seen and spoken with nearly twenty of his old comrades, who were hanging about the camp and seeking for employment. They were rather more difficult, however, in their choice than those which I had already enlisted; for not one of them would serve with a leader who had never served at all.

"We must make up to-morrow, sir," said Endem, "for your idleness hitherto. It answered no purpose my telling them that you would do this or do that; the answer always was — Let us see him fight. So to-morrow, at the assault, we must eat fire and brimstone, to show what sort of stuff we are made of."

"Rather a hot breakfast, Master Moric," I replied; "but, nevertheless, I don't think I shall find my appetite fail."

This conversation had been carried on in a low tone, but, nevertheless, it had caught the ears of the merchants; and one of them asked me at what time it was *intended* to storm the breach. I replied that I really

did not know, as I had not received my orders yet, but supposed that it would not be late; and Martin Vern, in reply, intimated his determination to wait and see the result before he departed. Soon after this I retired to the little cottage which had been appointed as quarters for myself and all my men; and having given what orders I thought necessary, and seen that the horses had been well fed and put under shelter, I threw myself down upon some straw, which Andriot had prepared for me in one corner of the hovel, and in a few minutes was fast asleep.

I was awake by daylight on the following morning; and was up, and had made a soldier's brief toilet, as well as armed myself completely, before five o'clock. Luckily it happened that I was so, for in a few minutes afterwards I was visited by a gay-looking youth, who introduced himself as the Captain Genissac, and who told me that in an hour we were to mount the breach together. He looked at me somewhat superciliously from head to foot; and, though I felt that I could have broken him through the middle over my knee, as a boy breaks a stick, his cool scrutiny annoyed and discomposed me. We talked over what was to be done for some time; and urging me to hasten my movements, he went to take his station at the head of the storming party. I hurried after at all speed, followed by my little band; and getting out of the hamlet, and passing through the middle of the tents toward the battery which had effected the breach a fine, a gay, and an interesting sight was presented, which remains fixed upon my memory, as much from the beauty of the scene, as from being the first military effort of any consequence in which I took a part.

The whole army was drawn out in the open space between the camp and the city; and about five or six hundred yards in advance of the line, was the small battery, which had effected a very insufficient breach in the wall. It was still firing, as it had been since the

break of day: and a light wind blew the wreaths of smoke down into the hollow which ran towards the Charente, enveloping the base of the hill on which Angoulême stands, while out of the white uncertain mist thus created started forth clear the town, with all its manifold towers and spires. The sun was shining brightly as he rose upon the glittering line of our cavalry and infantry, variously armed, and with many a cornet and a pennon amongst them; while the rich and peaceful-looking slopes and rises, the clear blue sky, the bright sunshine, and the soft murmur of the autumnal air, contrasted strangely and strikingly with the camp behind us, the long line of iron-clad soldiery in the front, the occasional thunder of our own artillery, and the flashes that burst from time to time from the walls of Angoulême.

Some way in advance of the general line appeared a small body of infantry, with Genissac at their head; and behind him, a little before the other forces, an entire infantry regiment, supported by a strong force of cavalry. Between that body and the little *peloton* of Genissac were a group of officers and gentlemen, with one or two led horses, apparently waiting for their riders. As I passed by, my eye rested for a moment upon the well-known d'Andelot; while another officer, considerably older in appearance, but with a fine open countenance, whom I took to be the far-famed Admiral de Coligny, sat beside him, on a strong horse, receiving from time to time communications from different persons who rode up. D'Andelot's visor was up, and as I passed he noticed me with an inclination of the head, and then, turning to the Admiral, pointed me out to him. Coligny immediately beckoned me towards him; and, ordering my men to march on and take the order from Monsieur de Genissac, I advanced to the side of the Admiral's horse.

"I knew your father well, Monsieur de Cerons," *said Coligny*; "and my beholding his son here this

day, gives me the pleasant expectation of soon seeing him behave as his father would have done on a similar occasion. I grieve that we have not the presence of your cousin, Monsieur de Blancford; but his faith has been supposed to be wavering for some time. I must not detain you, however: for here comes the Prince, and the word will be given in a moment."

I bowed, and then advanced immediately to the side of Genissac, who I found had drawn up my men with his own very fairly and very skilfully. In order to take advantage of some hollows in the ground, we were to advance six abreast, three of my men and three of his, with the two leaders at the head. As the whole of the party were composed of about a hundred men, he had filled up the space behind, where my scanty band ended, by his own troops; and, placing himself close to me, he said, "Now, Monsieur de Cerons, you and I will keep near together, as I may have something to say to you when we are near the breach. I wish they would send us the word to advance, for this long expectation dulls the men's spirits."

At that moment, however, an officer gave the word to march, while the battery opened a sharp fire upon the breach. In the first instance we had to descend some way, which we did with considerable rapidity, but not so fast as far to outstrip the regiment behind, who, as soon as they were within shot, opened a smart fire of small arms against the enemy. From the bottom of the valley we had now, however, to ascend to the Park; and the moment we began to do so, one of the hottest fires of musketry I ever saw was poured upon us from the breach and the neighbouring walls. One of Genissac's men went down; and one of mine staggered from a slight wound in the shoulder, but regained his footing and kept on with the rest. I was somewhat surprised that we did not advance more rapidly, and said to my companion, "Let us hasten forward! Let us hasten forward! *The men* will soon be out of the fire."

Genissac gave no order, and at the same time a shot, passing between him and me, carried away a part of my casque, and went through the head of one of the men behind.

"Don't be too hot! Don't be too hot!" he said, the minute after, when we had got so near that I could see the features of the men in the breach. "I am only ordered to make a reconnoissance; but to retreat immediately, if the breach is not practicable."

"But I was ordered to storm," I replied; "and the breach, though small, is deep, and seems to me quite practicable."

"Have with you! Have with you, then!" he said, "if you are so eager."

But the words we had uttered had been heard by those behind us; and, though we had been still advancing, the men began to waver. It was a critical moment; and, waving my sword over my head, I cried aloud, "To the breach! To the breach!"

My own men took it up, shouting, "To the breach! To the breach!" His people followed; and, rushing forward with jealous rivalry of each other, though, as we came nearer, the shots of the enemy told terribly amongst us, we climbed the height, and rushed up furiously to the foot of the wall. There was an immense deal of broken rubbish, earth, and stones to be passed, which had been cast down by the fire of our battery, and a tremendous discharge of musketry welcomed us at the top; but still we rushed on, while the regiment which had advanced to support us, now caught the spirit of the assault, and, doubling its pace, crossed the valley and charged up the hill. On we pressed as hard as we could go, with the stones and earth slipping away and rolling under our feet; all staggering, some falling, and only thankful that the dense smoke of the enemy's fire rolled into the breach, and prevented them from taking any very certain aim.

When first we arrived at the foot of the wall, the

breach was crowded by arquebusiers; but they began to fall back as we climbed over the piles of rubbish, and when we were near the top, only five or six men remained, of whom one rushed down several steps to meet me, aiming a pistol at me as he came, and firing within three paces. Striking my cuirass on the left side obliquely, the shot glanced off and entered my arm a little above the elbow; but it was a mere flesh wound and only inconvenient. A blow of my heavy horse-sword, however, dashed my adversary's casque down upon his head, broke the fastenings, and brought him on his knee; another blow, before he could ward it off, struck the helmet from his head, and at the same time inflicted a deep wound upon his forehead; and as he called out that he would surrender—indeed he had no choice—I passed him back to the hands of Moric Endem, who followed me close, without seeing anything further than that he was a young man of good mien. Genissac was now a step or two before me; but, rushing up, I was by his side in a moment, and in another instant we stood together at the top of the hill.

The interior of what was called the Park,—a large open space, forming a sort of Place d'Armes,—was now open before us; and, to my surprise, I beheld, drawn up on either side, and ready to charge us the moment we descended, a large body of men at arms, with their lances levelled, and supported by a considerable force of pikemen and arquebusiers on foot.

Our men were rushing up, however, one by one, as fast as they could climb, to our support; Moric Endem, having passed on his prisoner, was close behind us; a slight-looking youth, armed only with a close-covering casque and cuirass, was upon my right, struggling up with difficulty over a steep part of the ruin; and, giving him my hand, unfortunately for himself, I drew him up in a moment: Genissac was a little farther off on the same side, with four or five of his

followers; and, seeing the infantry regiment coming up, I thought it not at all improbable that we might be able to force an entrance, notwithstanding the strength of the enemy in the Park.

All this was soon thought, and done in a moment; but at the very same instant the regiment behind halted, a small party of horsemen galloped up towards us from our own army at full speed, and the arquebusiers from the Park opened a sudden and tremendous fire upon the breach. Three men amongst us were brought down at once; Genissac, standing upon a high point of the broken wall, received a shot in his head and fell back, rolling over and over down the heaps of rubbish, writhing in the agonies of death; one of his men fell forward severely wounded; and a shot took the poor youth I had just helped up, and entering his right side, laid him prostrate across one of my feet.

Still my own followers were coming rapidly up; several of Genissac's people were making their way towards the top; and though it was impossible to face the force in the Park, now that the other regiment had halted, it was quite possible to effect a lodgment on the breach. Turning, therefore, to those who were following, and to the group of officers, who had now advanced nearly to the foot of the wall, and were shouting up loudly to me, though I could not hear a word they said, from the noise of the small arms, I called to them to roll me up gabions and barrels, for that we could certainly effect a lodgment.

My words were passed down by those who were following; but D'Andelot, whom I now saw at the head of the officers, shook his clenched fist at me, and shouted to me, as I found, to come down and retreat. The words were passed up to me, and, with much regret I own, I prepared to obey.

"We must retreat," I said, "Moric. We are commanded to retreat!"

But at that moment I heard a voice, which I thought

I had heard somewhere before, proceeding from the casque of the young man who had fallen beside me, and who exclaimed, "Oh! do not leave me here!"

It would have been cruel to do so, even had it been more difficult and dangerous to rescue him than it was; and, therefore, taking him up in my arms, I carried him down to the spot where D'Andelot stood; and to which several horses had been brought by this time for the purpose of removing the wounded.

"You seem determined to get yourself killed, Monsieur de Cerons," said D'Andelot. "We only intended a reconnoissance, and poor Genissac has suffered for his folly, in changing it into an assault."

"My orders were to storm, sir," I said; "and I have done no more than I was directed to do."

"We were wrong! we were wrong, Monsieur de Cerons!" said that great commander. "We wanted to try you; but Genissac had full orders how to act, and he should have obeyed them. Now take a horse, put yourself at the head of his men as well as your own; get them into order, and make the best of your retreat. You are very well sheltered here, but you will find the fire somewhat hot in the valley. Don't mind using your legs there, for you have shown sufficiently that it is not bullets you are afraid of."

I only paused to tell Moric to place the lad I was carrying on a horse, and take him carefully to the camp, and then obeyed the orders of D'Andelot. The matter was a mere affair of discipline; the men followed my commands with alacrity; and choosing the direction which seemed most sheltered from the fire of the garrison, I led them on without loss, and with but little haste and confusion, till, passing the battery which had effected the breach, I took up the same position with them, which we had occupied in the morning, before the assault began.

I acted altogether as I had learned from the memoirs of various distinguished knights and officers that it was

right and proper to do on such occasions; and the moment I had reached the same spot from which we had started, I made the men wheel round again, and face the city, as if for a new assault. They were all picked soldiers, and they performed the manœuvre with promptitude and precision; but in the troubled state into which the whole art of warfare had fallen in that day, this little evolution, which never would have been neglected in former times, except in case of a complete defeat, excited the surprise of everybody; and a loud shout of applause burst from the regiments around.

At the same time the Prince de Condé, with the Admiral and his companions, moved slowly forward to meet D'Andelot, who was now riding up the slope. After conversing with him for a few minutes, they all advanced towards me, and various kind and complimentary things were said, of which I only remember now the words of the Prince de Condé.

"We shall take care, Monsieur de Cerons," he said, "how we put you upon dangerous services any more; for your life will henceforth be so much more precious to us than it seems to you, that we must not suffer you to risk it without much need."

They then inquired closely what I had seen within the breach; which I explained to them as well as I could; expressing my opinion, that by a strong effort the town might have been taken. Their better judgment and greater experience, however, showed them that such was not the case; and orders were immediately given for opening a battery in another place, on the heights of St. Ozani. As soon as this was determined, and orders given to that effect, the men were allowed to retire to their quarters; and I hurried down to the little hovel assigned me in the hamlet, to see what had become of Moric Endem, my prisoner, and the wounded youth, for whom I felt a considerable degree of anxiety.

CHAPTER VIII.

AT the door of the hovel I found Moric, with one of the men who had been wounded in the arm, and an old woman, who was bandaging up the injured limb. The first exclamation of my worthy lieutenant was, "You will find them both in there, sir; and a good ransom ought you to have for that smart youth; he is the Seigneur de Blaye. The old gentleman is with the other lad, who is badly hurt, and a surgeon too; but little good will they do him, I fear. He is drilled like a keyhole; and if there was any wind, it would whistle through him."

Without questioning him further, though without comprehending one half of what he meant, I entered the hut; when, to my utter astonishment, I found young Martin Vern stretched upon the straw which had served me during the previous night for a bed. His uncle was standing behind him, with a most anxious and sorrowful countenance, while a surgeon, with a long pair of forceps, was drawing something which proved to be a bullet, from a wound in his side. The young man bore the operation, which must have been extremely painful, with the utmost fortitude and resolution; shutting his teeth hard, so as to prevent even a groan from escaping.

Martin Vern looked at me, as I entered, somewhat reproachfully; but at that moment the surgeon, holding up the bullet in his forceps, exclaimed, "Here it is, here it is!" and on my asking some questions concerning the poor youth, he proceeded to pour forth upon me a quantity of barbarous terms, to explain the precise course the ball had taken; and the parts external and internal, which had been wounded.

I cut him short as soon as possible, thinking I perceived through all these technicalities, that the surgeon had hopes the youth would get better, and wished to give importance to the cure.

"Some better bed," he said, "must be provided for him immediately;" and he added, that if we would seek for one, he would wait and superintend the movement of the wounded man himself.

I immediately turned to see what could be done, and was followed by the merchant himself; who, as soon as we were out of the door, shook his head ruefully at me, saying, "Ah! Monsieur de Cerons, this was not kind of you, when you knew how much I wished to keep that boy from this warlike folly of his."

"My good friend," I replied, "you are entirely mistaken in supposing that I had any share in this matter. On my honour, I did not know who it was that fought so gallantly beside me till I entered the hut this moment. He gave me no intimation of it; and I did not even know that I had an additional man in the field."

"I never knew anything of it," cried Moric Endem, who had heard our conversation. "I never knew anything of it till we were just going to march, and then he came to me and besought me for pity's sake to let him go with us. He had bought himself a casque and a cuirass, and I pushed him in anywhere into the ranks, thinking it a devil of a pity that a fine high-spirited boy should be balked, and made a mere merchant of; to sit stupifying himself over a tall book, or selling silks and satins by the yard, when he is as proper a youth as ever was seen to take a lance in his hand, and meet the enemy."

Martin Vern shook his head with a melancholy "What has come of it?" and added, "Well, Monsieur de Cerons, I am glad at least you had no share in it; for I owe you so much gratitude for different things, that I would rather repay you in any other way than think you had done me an unkindness to make the balance even. What I am to do now I cannot tell. Business of infinite importance, not only to myself, but to the Prince and the Admiral, calls me immediately to Bordeaux; and yet I *cannot* bear to leave this boy, whom his dying father

placed under my charge not two months ago, without any one to take care of him or to attend him."

"Leave him to me, my good friend; leave him to me," I said. "I will treat him, depend upon it, as a brother. To move him now is out of the question; several days must elapse before Angoulême falls, as they have determined upon making another breach, and we have but five cannons in the army,—two of which are but bastards. By the time the place is taken, he will be better able to be moved; and no care shall be wanting on my part, I can assure you. You yourself will be back ere long, and I trust will find him better in all respects."

Martin Vern pressed my hand in his; and, thanking me with the deep, low-spoken words of true gratitude, he suffered it to be as I wished. At my suggestion, we sought for, and were fortunate enough to find, one of those beds which are fitted to horse-litters, in case it should be necessary to move the wounded man to any distance. In it he was carried almost immediately to the house where Martin Vern had taken up his own abode, and which his wealth had ensured should be of a far superior description. There the merchant placed in my hands the large sum of five hundred crowns for his nephew's expenses, and the fifty which he had promised for my escort. He besought me earnestly to spare nothing which could tend to the youth's recovery; to buy horses immediately to carry the litter, in case of need; to ensure the constant attendance of a surgeon, and to see him myself as frequently as I could.

I said and did all that I could to comfort the worthy merchant; and a few words spoken to him in a low tone by his nephew, ere he departed, telling him that, though I did not know who he was, I had saved his life by bearing him away from the breach, seemed to console good Martin Vern greatly, and give him greater confidence to leave the youth in my charge.

When *all this was* settled, he bade his nephew adieu,

and mounted his horse to depart. He paused a moment to grasp my hand in his, and then, just as he was setting out, said, "The time will come, Monsieur de Cerons,—the time will come, I am quite sure and confident, when I shall have an opportunity of showing my gratitude for all that you have done for me and mine."

As soon as he was gone I bethought me of my prisoner, whose situation for the time had quite passed from my mind; and hastening back to the place where I had left Moric Endem, I found him busily engaged in making preparations for rendering the hovel a more comfortable dwelling. As it now had been arranged, however, that I was to take up my abode in the house which had been hired for the young merchant, the adorning of what he termed my lodging was no longer necessary; and on inquiring after the prisoner, I found that they had put him in a sort of back shed, where the old woman I had before seen was even then in the act of dressing the wound on his head.

On entering, I found a sentry at the door, and the prisoner with his hands tied, very indignant at the treatment he had received. I was informed, however, that he had twice endeavoured to make his escape, and I therefore thought that few apologies were necessary. In justification of his conduct, he said that he had never surrendered, rescue or no rescue; and in consequence, before I would suffer his hands to be untied, I made him pronounce these words, something against his will. Although he was undoubtedly brave and high-spirited, I never yet saw a man more full of loud-tongued bravado; and thought that before he had vented his indignation, he would literally have tried to cut my throat in the shed. I listened to all he had to say with much more coolness than he seemed to think respectful, merely replying, while I uncovered my arm, in order that the old woman might exercise her skill upon me also, "Sir, you are a prisoner, and therefore privileged to rail."

Before his hands had been untied for five minutes,

however, he approached, looked at my arm, and said, "That's an awkward wound. How did you come by that, sir?"

"It was your handiwork, my good friend," I replied. "It was well it didn't go through my body."

"Indeed, indeed!" he cried, rubbing his hands; and I must say I never saw a person more heartily rejoiced at anything in my life, than he was that his hand had given me the wound under which I was then suffering.

"Well," he added, at length, "I suppose I must forgive you for tying my hands, after such a wound as that; and now tell me at what ransom do you intend to put me?"

"I know who you are," I replied, "and all about you; and I must say you have shown yourself a gallant soldier, though somewhat rash withal. You know of what consequence you are as well as I do, or better, and therefore I shall leave you to name your own ransom; so, now, let us see at what sum you value yourself?"

I was not wrong in my calculation. To say the truth, I should have been very much puzzled at what rate to fix his ransom myself; but in trusting to his vanity to do it, I knew I could not be very far wrong. He hesitated, however, and said, "If you know who I am, and all about me, you had better fix it yourself."

"I know so far about you," I replied, "that you are the Seigneur de Blaye; and the old and ordinary custom is, that a lord's ransom is one year's revenue, besides what his captor may think fit to exact on account of the prisoner's reputation in arms. You know your revenues better than I do, and your reputation in arms better than I do, and I, therefore, leave it to you to fix it yourself, being sure that so brave a man must be a man of honour."

"I see, sir," he said, "that I have fallen into the hands of a gentleman; and, therefore, will deal frankly *with you. My* revenues are four thousand crowns a

year; but since my uncle's death, I have somewhat hurt my means. I trust you will, therefore, take the four thousand without exacting anything more."

So surprised, so astounded, I may say, I was at the very name and idea of receiving such a sum, in consequence of my first day's actual service in arms, that I could not reply for some minutes. I had heard such things occasionally recounted, and that the famous Montluc had gained, or was likely to have gained, some few years before, no less than eighty thousand crowns as the ransom of a young Italian nobleman; but when it came home to myself, I could hardly believe it, with difficulty concealing my astonishment. He mistook my silence, it would seem, for discontent, and was going to add something in regard to his condition and inability to pay a greater sum, when I stopped him, saying, "It is enough, Monsieur de Blaye; it is enough. As an honourable man, I do not doubt your word; and I have heard that it is a common saying of one of the bravest captains on your own side, I mean Monsieur Montluc, that it is not the custom to skin one's prisoners in the present day. I have your word of honour as a gentleman; and you will accordingly remain in the camp and be my guest, until such time as your ransom can arrive."

"Oh! as soon as the city falls," he replied, "I will pay it you; and in the mean time thank you for your hospitality."

"Then you calculate upon the city falling very soon," I said, with a laugh.

He smiled in return, replying, "It ought to see all you Reformers rot before it surrenders, if the people in it knew what they were about; but there's Argenu, and Grignaud, and Mezière, brave enough men when they are in the field, but without the slightest idea of holding a walled place—the old woman who has just dressed *your* arm would make a better governor of Angoulême. *But, however,* as soon as you get into Angoulême, you

shall have the money. The Jews will give it me on my bond. It's crammed full of Jews to the very doors; and that is another reason it will fall. But, however, I hope this is not the house, the hospitality of which you invite me to partake;" and he looked round the shed in which we were still standing with some dismay.

"Oh, no!" I replied. "This, and the hovel near, formed my only lodging last night; but I have got better quarters to-day, and if you will come up with me, I will show you where they are."

The old lady who fulfilled the office of surgeon to the soldiery and inferior officers, had managed to bind up my wound very skilfully,—pouring in some peculiar compound of her own devising, which healed the wound so rapidly that I can scarcely say I received any further inconvenience from it. After she had done, and had received her reward, we walked up to my new dwelling, and I assigned to the young lord a room immediately beneath that which I had chosen for myself.

Having made this arrangement, and given some little regularity to my affairs, I went out to visit the different quarters of the camp, and to see more with my own eyes than I had hitherto been able to see.

The day passed over without any farther effort on our side than the erection and opening of the new battery; but as I went round every part of the encampment, I twice met the Prince de Condé and D'Andelot, and once the Admiral de Coligny. They noticed me, I saw, though neither of them spoke; and while their conduct showed me there was no want of activity or vigilance on the part of our leaders, my appearance at different points of the camp was construed by them, I afterwards found, into proofs of my zeal and industry.

I have mentioned that each of these generals had praised my conduct highly in the morning; but the most satisfactory proof to myself of having acted well, was afforded to me that night. On my return, towards *supper time, I found*, besides one of my men on guard

at the door, good Moric Endem standing talking to him while waiting my return.

"No want of men now, sir," he said. "This morning's work has got your name up famously. You have nothing to do but to whistle, and you'll have all the stray men of the camp. I have had a hundred talking to me about it already, at least; but of course, I could do but little till I spoke to you. There were five or six rare old hands, however, that I could not let go away; so that we now muster seventeen. How many more would you like engaged?"

"At present," I replied, "not more than five and twenty or thirty in all, Moric. We can do a good deal with that number,—more may be difficult to manage; and though we are well provided for at present, they might in the end be difficult to feed."

"You are quite right, sir, you are quite right," replied my good lieutenant. "A small band, but every one a good man, depend upon it, is better than an army with every other man an ass or a sheep; and sure I am that I can fill up your troop in such a way that there shall not be thirty more desperate, fearless, skilful ragamuffins in the whole place."

"Well, do so," I replied, "as speedily as possible. And now, where is this Monsieur de Blaye?"

"Oh! you will find him down there, at the house by the river," replied Moric, with a grin, applying to the house at the same time an epithet which I had never heard before, but which instantly designated it as a place where no man of any refinement of mind or feeling could be found. "There he has been ever since you went away, almost," added the old soldier; "and I hear from a trooper who served with him two years ago, that he is never satisfied except he is there, or with a dice-box in his hand. If you don't send Andriot after him, he'll not be up to supper."

"Andriot is a mere youth," I replied. "I wish you *would go* yourself, Moric."

"That I will, that I will," he said. "I am no prude about such things; though I cannot but think that a gentleman with his head broke might do better, or at least wait till the campaign is over."

Thus saying he sped away, and soon returned, bringing the Seigneur de Blaye along with him. As I had not the keeping of my prisoner's morality, his conduct gave me but little concern at the time; but it became afterwards, I grieve to say, a matter of sad and great importance; and I must add here, that, during the three or four days he remained with me, though brave and good-humoured, as well as vain and light, his life was one continued course of the lowest intemperance and debauchery.

On the following day, I went early to see the battery, and the effect it had produced; but there was as yet no appearance of its being practicable; and the Prince de Condé, whom I met near the spot, stopped his horse to speak with me upon the subject, saying, "Probably, to-morrow, we may be able to do something. Will you be of the storming party again, Monsieur de Cerons?"

"Willingly, my Lord," I answered, "and hope to be permitted to take the same post."

"No," replied the Prince, "I will not suffer you to expose yourself too far. Besides, D'Andelot is jealous of you, and will lead the party this time himself. But you shall be one of the number, if you desire it. You can take four men with you, if you please, but no more; for after yesterday's exploits, every gentleman in the camp wants to have a share in it."

I thanked him for the permission, and retired; and about eleven on the following morning the attack was determined upon. The army was drawn up in battle array; the storming party was formed and led by D'Andelot himself; the batteries were redoubling their fire, and we were even beginning to march, when a white flag was suddenly displayed upon the breach, and some horsemen *came* forth from the city, with an offer

of capitulation. The terms were soon agreed upon; the soldiers of the garrison were permitted to march out with their swords, the leaders with their baggage, and the town was surrendered immediately.

A little incident occurred in the marching in of the troops, which struck me greatly, and showed that the good old spirit of our ancient armies was not entirely extinct. There was some dispute, at first, as to what regiment should take possession of the town; but the Admiral settled the matter, by declaring that the storming party having been disappointed, should march in first through the breach, with his brother, D'Andelot, at the head, while he led another party round by the gates. This was accordingly effected; and, as was natural enough under such circumstances, on taking the city we found almost all the houses shut up and barricaded. As we came into the long street, however, which runs down the hill, we saw the troops of the Admiral advancing, and a good deal of confusion taking place. We had ourselves preserved the strictest order; but as there were a good many officers and leaders amongst us, D'Andelot permitted us to separate, in order to remedy any evil that might be going on.

Taking my way down the street to the spot where I had seen some confusion, I found that, in spite of all commands and efforts, some excesses had been committed. A jeweller's shop had been broken open, and the Admiral having been informed thereof, had turned back and ordered that the house should be surrounded, and the men found therein forced to march out one by one. The regiment commanded to perform this service was that of an old soldier, famous for his courage, named the Seigneur de Puyviault; and as I came up on foot, I heard more of the facts than the Admiral himself was aware of. The soldiers in the house, it seems, were Puyviault's own men; and it was very evident, from the dispositions he made, that the worthy commander was *inclined to* screen them from the punishment which was

justly their due, and which the Admiral would certainly have inflicted had he discovered them. The moment they were driven forth, they were swallowed up in the mass of Puyviault's men surrounding the door; and Coligny, seeing what nobody could help seeing, rode up in fury, and pushed Puyviault vehemently with his leading staff. The colour came into the commander's cheek, and one or two of his followers behind exclaimed, "He has struck you! he has struck you!"

One moment of forgetfulness on the part of Puyviault would have given another striking instance of how frail are the bonds which unite volunteer armies together; but, turning to those behind him, he said, "I endure everything from my leader; nothing from my enemies: and I this day show you what I expect from you."

There was a murmur of applause ran through those around; and after that little incident the town was quietly occupied by the Protestant troops.

CHAPTER IX.

It is needless for me to pause upon all the movements that subsequently took place. They have met with historians more competent to treat of military details than myself; nor would my own personal narrative for several weeks, nay, for months, present many matters of interest. No sooner had Angoulême capitulated, and order been restored in the town, than Monsieur de Blaye found means to procure easily the money for his ransom, and paid me the sum of four thousand crowns, which is certainly far more than I had ever possessed in my life. In the arrangements which had been made between myself and Moric Endem, and which he communicated to the men as we engaged them, the ransom of prisoners, it may be remembered, had been held apart as belonging to the actual captors. Nevertheless, I

determined to endeavour, as far as possible, to attach the men to me by liberality, and to show that I could recompense good service, in order that, if necessity required it, I might be the more fully justified in punishing bad conduct.

I accordingly called the men together as soon as I had received the ransom of my prisoner; and explaining to them what I was about to do, and the reason why, I divided the money into two equal portions, and having reserved one for myself, I divided the other half again into two, whereof I bestowed one upon my good lieutenant, Moric Endem, to whom I owed so much, and divided the residue amongst the men who accompanied me to the breach. The others who had chosen to wait till they saw me tried, looked a little foolish and mortified upon the occasion, but acknowledged it was all just; and to give them some consolation, I bestowed ten crowns each upon them out of my own stock, only requiring that each two men should provide themselves with a small tent, and each five with a baggage horse, and a boy to ride it.

After this was done, my next thought was to redeem the dagger which I had left in the hands of the Jew: but the matter was somewhat difficult to be arranged; for how was I to obtain the weapon without going myself to Bordeaux, or without sending some one in whom I could fully trust? I thought of Andriot, of whose honesty I felt as certain as of my own; but then he was by far too illiterate and simple in his nature to deal with so shrewd a personage as the Jew; and the specimen which I had obtained of good Solomon Ahar's proceeding was not very well calculated to increase my confidence in his probity.

Although the weapon might be considered as a mere gewgaw, yet I clung to the thought of regaining it as speedily as possible, with feelings which some people will easily enter into. It seemed as if it were my inheritance; it was the only thing I possessed of my

father's; it was the tie between me and past years. I meditated over this matter for some time, without coming to any satisfactory conclusion; and at length remembering that there were many other things to think of, I proceeded to the bedside of young Martin Vern, to prepare him for removal on the following day.

Since the extraction of the ball, he had been daily recovering strength. The great quantity of blood he had lost had, in all probability, been the cause that no great fever had ensued; and he had been able to lie and talk to me at various times during the preceding day without any apparent inconvenience. I now found him still better; and he heard that the siege of Angoulême was over, and that we were preparing to make a retrograde movement, to attack the small town of Pons, with apparent pleasure. He expressed himself perfectly willing and able to be moved; but only desired to find a messenger by whom he could send word of his state to his uncle, and to tell him in what direction we were likely to proceed.

I instantly caught at the opportunity of communicating with the Jew through Martin Vern; and after consulting with the young man upon the subject, and telling him the whole facts, the matter was very easily arranged. Andriot was sent back to Bordeaux with a mere verbal message concerning the movements of the army, but with a letter from me to the merchant, telling him of his nephew's improved health, and of my own wishes with regard to the Jew, and enclosing both the receipt which the worthy Solomon had given me, and the requisite sum for redeeming the dagger.

Andriot, by this time, had seen nearly enough of military service, and was not at all sorry to lay aside the cuirass and helmet. He did not even affect to conceal that such was the case, but at the same time begged that I would let him return and join me in the capacity of a servant as before.

Early on the following morning we began our march

for Pons; and that city, which was defended also by a citadel, was besieged in form, the garrison expressing its determination to hold out to the last extremity. They kept their word: the place was taken by assault; and, for the first time, I beheld the most awful scene that war, always terrible, can display. Death and destruction, and cold-blooded massacre, surrounded me on every side; but terrible as it all was I had the satisfaction of contributing, in some degree, to the cessation of the evil. One or two of the other officers joined with me; and we endeavoured, as far as possible, to shelter even the officers and soldiers that surrendered.

This attempt was nearly vain, however; but it prepared the way for more successful efforts when the pillage of houses commenced. To prevent plunder was impossible, I found; but to stop massacre was less difficult, and most of my soldiers were beginning to listen to the repeated commands that they received, and to form into some order, when, suddenly, a girl rushed from one of the houses, pursued by a trooper whom I had engaged at Barbezieux, and who had shown himself somewhat slack in the combat, and eager in the pillage.

Both the girl and the man heard clearly the orders I was in the very act of repeating, to abstain from outrage; and, rushing forward, she clung to my knees. The man darted on after her, swearing that he would have his lawful prey; that the town was taken by assault; and nobody should stop him. There was a large body of soldiers coming up at the moment, under Monsieur de Boucard; and I knew that, at that moment, example was everything. The man had the insolence to seize the woman by the shoulder at my very feet; but my heavy double-edged sword was naked in my hand at the moment; and his foul fingers had scarcely touched her, when his spirit went to its dark account.

"Rightly done, rightly done, Monsieur de Cerons," *cried Boucard*, turning partly towards his men, and

partly towards me. "The same punishment for any one who commits such excesses."

The greater part of the town's people were saved, but four hundred of the soldiery were massacred in cold blood; and I grieve to say that four hundred more were afterwards slain when the citadel was taken. There is every reason to believe that the castle had capitulated; but, by some mistake, the assailants got in at once, and put to death every soul they met with. I was not in the town at the moment that this latter act took place, having been ordered to follow the Admiral de Coligny with all speed towards Chauvigny, whither he had marched some days before, in pursuit of the Duke of Montpensier. I was ordered to bear him tidings of the fall of Pons; and a company of foot soldiers was added to my band, so that we might afford at once a small reinforcement to his division of the army, and give him notice that those he had left behind would soon be prepared to support him.

Various movements on the part of both the Catholic and Protestant armies followed during the greater part of the winter, and the early spring of the ensuing year. The Duke of Montpensier collected his forces in the neighbourhood of Chatellerault; and tidings spread abroad that the Duke of Anjou, the king's brother, was coming down with a great force, to put himself at the head of the Catholic armies. Various disasters also befel different detachments of Protestant soldiers making their way up from distant parts of the country, to join the main body under the Admiral and the Prince de Condé. The Protestant leaders, however, did not suffer themselves to be daunted, and still acted upon the offensive, harassing the enemy in continual skirmishes, and prepared even to risk the event of a general battle.

In all these proceedings I had my share. I knew that all and everything depended upon my own exertions and my own success; and, daily becoming more and more habituated to the life I led, I suffered no oppor-

tunity to pass of attacking any detached body of the enemy; and when I found myself not strong enough to attempt any of the small fortified towns or castles, I soon found plenty of leaders who were willing to aid me for a share of the plunder which was likely to be taken. Thus I was seldom out of the saddle; scarcely two days at any time without crossing my sword with an enemy; and, never suffering myself by any ambition to be led into the great mistake of increasing the numbers of my band, it became rather a privilege than otherwise to obtain admission into it.

Such exertions were not without their reward; for, though in the course of the campaign I did not meet with any other such rich prize as Monsieur de Blaye had proved, yet many a prisoner of less importance was taken,—several by my own hand; while a large quantity of booty was obtained,—especially after the gay and luxurious soldiery of the Duke of Anjou began to arrive in the country.

On one occasion, we took an immense quantity of baggage, belonging to two or three noblemen of the court, in a village which they had fortified for their own defence; so that the amount of fifteen thousand crowns, in money alone, was divided between our troop and a band of foot who had joined us in the enterprise. We had been told that the Duke of Joyeuse was in the village himself; but, if he was so, he made his escape with the other nobles, before we forced our way in. Had I been able to capture him, indeed, I might have thought that I well deserved the name which I had, by this time, acquired in the army, of the "Fortunate Monsieur de Cerons." I was, indeed, in many respects, extremely fortunate; for I had escaped without any wounds that deserved the name, except the pistol-shot in the arm, which I received at Angoulême; and in the month of February, I had, in my own private store, an accumulation of nearly six thousand crowns.

Not twelve months before, I should have considered

that fortune as quite sufficient for all my wants and wishes through life; but my feelings had changed,—I desired more, far more. What was it that was at my heart? Was it avarice? Oh, no! What was it then? I cannot tell. There was a hope, and an expectation, and a looking forward into the future, that made me greedy without greediness, and aspiring without ambition.

I must now return to speak, for a moment, of one whom I have not noticed for some time. The progress of young Martin Vern was slow but steady; and at the end of about a month or six weeks, he was enabled to sit up and walk about the camp. In a week more he could ride out with me on horseback, when, with no particular enterprise in view, I rode out to reconnoitre the enemy, or examine the country around. From his uncle he had received no intelligence up to the time of which I have just been speaking, about which period we were marching upon Saumur, and completely master of the country between the Loire and the Charente. But a terrible storm was gathering to the east, where the army of the Duke of Anjou was daily increasing in strength, and moving rapidly towards us. A degree of ferocity, too, was beginning to animate both parties. The Count de Lude attacked the town of Mirabeau; received its surrender upon capitulation, and yet basely ordered the greater part of the garrison to be put to the sword, in cold blood. The wrath and indignation of the Protestants now exceeded all bounds,—especially as La Borde and his brother, who were amongst the first victims at Mirabeau, were universally loved and admired in the army. No one felt their death more bitterly than the Admiral de Coligny; and, swearing by all he held sacred that he would avenge them, he refused all terms of capitulation to the town of St. Florent, which he was then besieging, but gave the garrison notice to defend themselves to the last, as, beyond all doubt, he would put every man to the sword.

I was myself, at the time, marching forward with a large body of troops towards Loudun; but I heard, shortly afterwards, that the Admiral had, too terribly, kept his word. We came in presence of the enemy in the neighbourhood of Loudun; and, on the assembling of the whole Protestant force, it was found that we were not much inferior in number to our antagonists. But the weather had now become extremely severe; and the Duke of Anjou, not judging it prudent to risk a general battle at that moment, retired, leaving us to take a little repose in winter quarters.

Some days before he retreated, however, I was rejoined by the good youth, Andriot, who bore a letter from good Martin Vern, announcing that he would speedily visit us in our quarters. Andriot himself had much to tell; for he had been at the Château de Blancford, and had borne tidings of all my proceedings, as far as he knew them, to those in whom he believed I was interested at my ancient home. He repeated to me all the kind things that the boys had said; all the affectionate words of old La Tour; and he told me how Louise's eyes had sparkled when she saw him; how she had made him repeat over and over again everything that related to me; and how she had wept to hear of my good success, which the youth declared he could not understand at all,—though I understood it right well. He had taken care, he said, as far as possible, to keep out of the way of the Baron; but he was caught the second day of his visit, and made his escape as fast as he could, to avoid being beaten out with stirrup-leathers, with which my worthy cousin threatened him highly.

The letter of Martin Vern gave but little intelligence of anything but his own approach; and we looked for his arrival, anxiously, for three or four days; at the end of which time, as I was sitting with his nephew, in my quarters, at the little village of Trois-moutiers, the good merchant made his appearance, accompanied by a much *more* imposing train of followers than he had displayed

when I last saw him. His first attention was, of course, given to his nephew; but, after embraces and congratulations, he turned to me, on my affairs, and told me that he had succeeded in one part of his mission, but had been unsuccessful in another. The dagger, he said, he had not been able to redeem, having found that my friend, Monsieur Stuart, had already redeemed it, when he heard how fortunate I had been in the army, with the purpose of carrying it to me direct. This intelligence mortified me a good deal; but the worthy merchant had consolation for me.

"I have seen your fair cousin," he said, "and a beautiful creature she is. Not knowing whether there was anything private in your letter or not, I delivered it to her as she passed through the room where the Baron kept me waiting; and the tidings that you gave her must have moved her much; for she first turned so pale that I thought she would have fainted, and then grew red again, and pressed your letter to her lips, and thanked me a thousand times for bearing it. As she ran away immediately to read it, and I did not see her when I went back again to the château, I feared that I should have no answer to convey to you; but the servant who brought me, two days after, some bonds for the money that your cousin wanted, gave me also this letter for you, and I think it is in a woman's writing."

The moment I saw it, I knew Louise's writing; and, approaching the sconce, I tore it open, and read—Oh, how my heart beat! oh, how nearly were my eyes overflowing as I read the sweet, the dear, the tender, the affectionate words with which she greeted me!

"Dearest, dearest Henri!" it began, "how can I ever thank you for the comfort, for the consolation, for the joy, that your letter has given me!—the only consolation, the only joy that I have had since you left me! I will not upbraid you for quitting me without bidding *me adieu; for,* to fly was all that you could do, *and to go without* farewell saved me, perhaps, a long

and bitter pang, even though it denied me a sad and painful pleasure. The news of your success, from your own hand, is, indeed, gratifying; but farther accounts of that success have now reached me, and I trust in Heaven that they may be true.

"O Henri! can I doubt anything that is told me of you, which represents you as braver, and nobler, and more generous than any one else? Perhaps it is all very foolish to think in this way; but you have been my companion from my childhood,—the kindest, the dearest, the best of brothers to me!—the one that I have loved the most on all the earth, since my poor mother's death. How, then, can I think sufficiently of you?—how can I think at all, with hope and comfort, of any one else but you? My two poor brothers, Charles and Albert, are suffering under the same dark and cheerless fate as myself; and when we steal up to sit together in the room that once was yours, we talk of you and of all your kindness, and of the days that are gone by for ever; and we mingle our tears together, when we think that we may never see him again, whom we all loved so dearly. They, indeed, vow that, when they are able, they will fly to join you at the army, and fight under your sword. But what is to become of me?

"But I will not make you sad, Henri, with my sadness; nor will I dwell upon all that is terrible to me, and painful in this house at this moment. From the little that you saw you may conceive the rest; and nothing is too terrible to be true. Perhaps, if you were to write to my father, it might do good; for, though he is very much exasperated against you, and will not even hear your name mentioned from any of us, yet when I have heard other people praise you, and mention some high deed you have done, my father's eyes have looked bright, and I have thought he seemed somewhat proud that you should be his near relation. Of what are his plans or his purposes I can give you no account. He is evidently wretched here; and I have heard some words spoken in regard to a journey to the capital, if a truce or peace

were to take place, or if a safeguard could be obtained from the Court. When I see him so unhappy, I would fain console him, but he will not be consoled; and the moment I attempt to do it, the expression of his face changes from melancholy to anger.

"You tell me to think of you, and that you think of me constantly. O dear Henri! if you could see my thoughts, you could never fancy that you were forgotten even for a moment by

"LOUISE LE BLANCFORD."

The worthy merchant had not been long with us before he was summoned to the presence of the Prince de Condé, to whom his arrival had been notified; and I was not allowed more than a few minutes alone to dream over the sweet and tender letter of Louise, before an officer from the Admiral warned me to have every thing prepared to march at day-break on the following morning, for the purpose of attacking the Catholic army in its retreat.

The Admiral himself led the *avant garde*, while the Prince de Condé followed at the head of the rest of the forces, and I with my own troop, and another small troop which was placed under my command for the purpose, was ordered to manœuvre on the Prince's right, for the purpose of deceiving the enemy into the belief that we were marching in three divisions. The task was allotted to me, because it was well known that I had reconnoitred the whole country on that side, during the three or four preceding days.

The issue of the attempt would have been more fortunate, however, had they attached me to the Admiral's division; for we were at that time in a part of the country filled with Catholics; and I have not the slightest doubt that both the generals were purposely deceived by their guides. The Admiral we saw nothing of for a long time after his departure; and the Prince de Condé, *beginning his* march about half an hour before

daybreak, was led straight on to the enemy's camp, instead of approaching it on the north, as he had intended.

About eight o'clock in the morning, both he and I perceived the camp of the Duke of Anjou, strongly entrenched and flanked by a stream, but not the slightest appearance of the Admiral on any side; and from the whole aspect of the scene we derived the strongest proof that Coligny had not even approached the enemy's camp. Notwithstanding our great inferiority of numbers, however, the Prince determined to commence the attack, seeing clearly that the Admiral had been misled, and hoping that the sound of the cannon would bring him up to the field of battle. The order was then given for the skirmishers to advance; and, according to the directions I had received, I made the greatest possible display of my forces on the right, occupying the attention, and diverting the efforts, of a part of the Duke of Anjou's army.

The troops that the Prince de Condé had thrown forward were met by the cavalry of Souline, Monsalez, and La Vallette, and driven back for some way at the point of the sword; but the famous Count de Montgomery, and several other distinguished officers, rallied them, and the cannon brought forward upon the height, opened a sharp fire upon the Duke's encampment. Each party was animated by the same courage and spirit; the troops on both sides were fighting under the eyes of their most celebrated leaders; and the advantages and disadvantages of the day remained so completely balanced, that if the Admiral had come up in time, the camp of the Duke must have been forced, and his army, in all probability, annihilated.

In the meantime, Martigue, at the head of three cornets of horse, had come out to reconnoitre my strength; but it luckily so happened that the small body of men which had been placed under my command, as an addition to my own troop, consisted prin-

cipally of horse arquebusiers, and I contrived, by thinly lining the hedges with these soldiers dismounted while I filled up the gaps with my cavalry, to make my force appear much larger than it really was. Martigue, who was an old and experienced soldier, at first seemed to entertain great suspicions of what was really the case, advanced up the hill with a resolute face, as if he was determined to dislodge me.

Although I had no chance of contending with him, I determined not to give way till I was forced; and suffering him calmly to come completely within shot, I ordered the arquebusiers to fire, and then spring upon their horses. This was done through the hedges with considerable effect; several of the shots telling in the midst of Martigue's own troop, and producing great confusion, while what seemed to them a body of fresh cavalry appeared behind the hedges, and decided their retreat. The shortness of the daylight at that period of the year, favoured not a little the Duke of Anjou; for, on the arrival of the Admiral, who had been led several miles out of his way, the day was found to be too near the close for any farther advantage to be gained.

Not a few difficulties and dangers, however, presented themselves to the Protestant army, when it contemplated a retreat; and the Prince determined to stop upon the ground he occupied. Just as it was turning dark, this resolution was notified to me by an officer, who brought me also high praises from the Prince, not for having fought well, but for having avoided fighting. His orders now were to retreat a little from the ground I had taken up, and to do my best to cover his right flank, —sending him instant notice of attack, and making what head against the enemy I could, in order to give him time for preparation. He would have sent me more men, he said, but the position that both he and the Admiral occupied was so hazardous, he could not spare any.

My retreat *was* easily effected; but as I came down

the hill, I was somewhat alarmed and surprised by seeing a large body of men moving up in the dusk, across one of the wide open plains of that part of the country. In the dim twilight, I could not distinguish anything farther than that there must be two or three thousand men, with what seemed to be artillery; and I was upon the eve of sending off intelligence of the fact to the Prince de Condé, when the sound of some bells, such as they hang round the necks of the draft oxen, caught my ear, and made me comprehend at once what sort of an apparition this was. It proved that a rascally guide, who had accompanied the attendants, camp followers, and others bringing up our baggage, had misled this important body also, and was guiding it direct into the midst of the Duke of Anjou's men.

An immense booty it certainly would have afforded to the Catholics, had I not fortunately met the mass of rabble, horse-boys, sutlers, bad men, bad women, and baggage-waggons, that was trooping on into the hands of the enemy. Approaching cautiously, that I might be quite sure I was right, I called out as soon as I had ascertained the fact, and commanded this great procession to halt. At the very first word, the guide it seems would have fled; but the leader of the party, who was a man of some execution, and an old soldier, had entertained suspicions for sometime that all was not right; and on the man's attempt to spur away, shot him through the head.

As soon as some explanations had taken place between myself and the rest, a scheme struck me, which I instantly proceeded to put in practice. All the men were very willing to put themselves under my command; and, returning up the hill till I came within sight of the lights in the enemy's camp, I formed an encampment there, defending it as well as I could with carts and waggons. I then collected together all the most likely varlets that I could find, put my own men in command over them, and arming them to the best of my power, prepared to

defend that post in case of need, making sure that, for an hour or two, at least, I could completely cover the right of the Prince de Condé. I despatched a messenger to him, however, to tell him what had occurred, and to say that if he thought fit, when he and the Admiral fired their cannon at nine o'clock, as was customary, I would do the same, as there was an old dismounted culverine in one of the baggage-waggons, which would the more completely serve to impose upon the enemy.

On his return, the messenger told me the Prince laughed heartily; and, entering into the spirit of the thing at once, bade me follow out my plan according to my own proposal. It took some time, indeed, to get out the culverine, to place it in such a position that it could be fired without danger, and to draw out a nail which had been driven into the touchhole. This was all accomplished, however, before the hour appointed; and no sooner was the gun fired from the quarters of the Prince de Condé, than the Admiral on one hill, and I on the other, shot off our ordnance, doubtless much to the surprise, and somewhat to the consternation, of the camp below.

Indeed, it formed a scene altogether not a little striking and beautiful; and somewhat imposing and majestic it must have appeared to the enemy, who could see it all at once. I had gone forth to fire the culverine myself, fancying that what between its antiquity and the quantity of powder with which it had been crammed in order to make the report the louder, it might do what it did not, and burst under the operation; and as I gazed over the range of the camp—with the immense numbers of fires to keep the people warm, which had been lighted all along the lines, blazing brightly over a great extent of the opposite hill, and sweeping quite down across the mouth of the valley where the Prince de Condé's division remained till the illumination was taken up again by my own little encampment on those heights—I myself experienced feel-

ings not a little akin to awe. There, too, at about the distance of three quarters of a mile, were all the fires and torches in the camp of the Duke of Anjou; while between that globe of light and the semicircle of fire that surrounded it, remained a dark black ring, on which the struggle of the morning had been carried on, and in the expanse of which nothing was now to be seen but a single lantern, or a flambeau wandering here and there, and seeking for the wounded or the dead.

As I stood and gazed over the scene, the murmur of the merriment that was kept up by the varlets and people of the little encampment behind me, was borne away by the gale which blew strong from the north-east; and a few minutes after the guns had been fired, wafted upon the wings of the wind, from the camp of the Admiral, came suddenly one of the Protestant psalms, sung by several thousands of voices at once, and sweeping mournfully but sweetly through the dark and solemn night. If I joined not in the melody, I joined at least in the prayer that it conveyed on high; and I was listening still with no small delight, when the youth, Andriot, plucked me by the sleeve, and told me there was somebody who wished to speak with me in the encampment.

There was a meaning look in the boy's face,—a mixture of joy and archness, which I did not at all understand; but I followed without farther question to a tent which had been prepared for me, and towards which he now led the way. There were lights within, and a good number of people standing round it; and in drawing back the flap of the tent, I saw a table laid out with a very splendid supper, which, as I afterwards found, had been prepared for the Prince de Condé, who, probably, that night went without.

But that which surprised me much more (for I was well aware that the whole provisions of the army were with my part of the encampment), was to see a respect-

able-looking elderly lady with her back towards me, and an old man with white hair bending down to point out to her something in a book upon the table. The little noise I made in entering did not disturb them; but my first step in the tent caused the old man to raise his head, and, to my inexpressible astonishment, I beheld good Monsieur la Tour, while the old lady, turning round, displayed to my sight the well-known features of her who had been the faithful attendant of the former Baroness de Blancford, and since the attached, though humble, friend of her daughter.

CHAPTER X.

It was evident from the manner in which La Tour and the old lady, whom we called Dame Marguelette, received me, that they had been already acquainted with the fact of my being there; and, therefore, there was no degree of astonishment whatever in their countenances, though much joy. I thought they would have devoured me; but when the first expressions of gladness and satisfaction were over, I remarked a great change in the countenance of the good old pastor. The few months that I had been absent seemed to have worn and broken him more than several years had done at a preceding period; and there were also lines of much care and thought about his brow and eyes, and a melancholy expression round his mouth, which was very painful to me to behold. Nor was my good old friend, Dame Marguelette, as well-looking or as hale as when I left her; but they, on the other hand, could hardly find words to express how much improved I appeared to them in personal appearance since I had quitted the château.

After a few minutes given to mutual gratulations,

my next questions, of course, were, where was the Baron, and what brought them there?

"Alas! my son," replied La Tour, "where the Baron is I cannot well tell you; but I much fear that he is in the hands of the enemy. I trust it is not with his own consent; but I fully believe with the consent and by the arrangement of the woman whom he has so madly made his wife. But I have a long story to tell you, Henri, which will explain the whole; and I had better tell it you at once. Alas! you little know what a change has taken place since you were at Blancford."

He then went on to tell me all that had occurred, drawing a sad picture of a wretched and miserable family. The Baroness he depicted as harsh, haughty, and unprincipled,—capricious to such a degree that there was no calculating upon any determination for a whole day, and only chequering the most idle and licentious levity with occasional fits of violent passion, or long hours of gloomy sullenness. The Baron, on his part, evidently both contemned and despised her; and yet, as we so frequently see, the woman who had acquired a tie upon him by his passions and his vices, ruled him like a slave by his weaknesses, even after his passions had been sated. The conduct of both to the children of the late Baroness was anything, La Tour said, but what it should be; though towards Louise, the old man said, her father displayed strong affection, and sought her society when he seemed to fly from that of any one else. As to the religion of the Baroness, the Protestant minister declared his solemn belief that she had none; but if she had a leaning either way, it was towards Catholicism. He feared very much, too, he added, he feared very much that the Baron himself was wavering in his faith. "And that fear," said he, "has induced me to cast every other consideration behind me, and to remain with the poor children, still to guard *their minds* from perversion as far as possible!"

The time since my departure had thus passed, he said, in the most comfortless state of discontent on all parties, until at length the Baron had declared, that if he could not obtain letters of protection to reside unmolested in Paris with his whole household, he would take arms and join the Protestant forces.

It was the policy of the Court of France at that time, by every sort of bribe, by every promise of immunity and inducement that could be held out, to prevent the lukewarm Protestants from joining the more zealous ones in arms. The words of the Baron were speedily noised abroad; and with no greater space of time than was necessary for a courier to travel post-haste from Bordeaux to Paris, and from Paris to Bordeaux, a safe conduct for the Baron and every one whose name he chose to insert in it, arrived at the château de Blancford, with the sole condition annexed, that he should present himself at the Court as speedily as possible, where every sort of honour and distinction, it was said, awaited him.

"His resolution was taken in a moment," continued La Tour; "and he proposed to me, ungraciously enough, indeed, that my name should be put into the list. For the children's sake, and especially for the sake of dear Louise, I suffered it to be done: and we advanced by slow journeys altogether, till yesterday morning, when, the Baroness declaring that, by pushing forward to Chatellerault, and thence to Laselle, they would put the Vienne and the Creux between them and the contending armies, and thus pass on to Paris without interruption, all the heavy baggage, and several of the servants and retainers, together with the old men and women of the party, such as myself and Dame Marguelette, were directed to follow more slowly. But I yesterday heard the Baroness speaking with one of the guides who had been hired to conduct them, not long before they went, in such a manner as to convince me that she, at least, would not be ill-pleased to fall into the hands of the

Catholic army. The Baron and the rest went on; and though they promised to send back a messenger to tell us when they had safely passed the Vienne, none has ever come near us; and this morning we fell in with the baggage of our own army, and came on with it, thinking that we should be in greater security.

"But where is Louise?" I cried, immediately. "Have they taken her on with them?"

"Alas! yes, my son," replied the pastor. "All the younger people have gone on; and I do not believe that the Baroness will at all grieve that they should be separated from those who have hitherto had the charge and direction of their youth."

These tidings made me, I acknowledge, very uneasy; and I meditated for some time without any reply, revolving in my mind a plan for gaining more certain information regarding my relations. I reflected that if they had taken the road towards Chatellerault at all, and been made prisoners, they must have fallen in with some of the troops of the Duke of Anjou's left wing, probably under La Vallette, and I therefore resolved, if possible, the next morning, to make an excursion on my own right, and attempt to carry off some prisoners, who might give me information.

In the meanwhile, I found that the Baron's baggage, and all his old servants, were in the immediate neighbourhood of the spot where they had erected my tent, and I took care that everything should be done to make the people comfortable.

I was somewhat uneasy, however, at not seeing good Martin Vern and his nephew, who, I knew, must have remained with the baggage when the Prince de Condé advanced. I accordingly sent out Andriot, and one or two others, to seek for them, which was somewhat of a difficult task; as the waggons, and carts, and horses, and tents that formed my encampment were spread over a very large space of ground. They were found at length, however, together with the Prince de Condé's Intendant,

wandering about at the extreme end of the encampment, not choosing to trust themselves without a guide in the wide chaos of all sorts of rascals and lumber that it contained. Good Martin Vern seemed not a little discontented with his expedition, and declared that, as soon as he had seen the Prince de Condé on the following morning, and had settled with him the business that brought him thither, he and his nephew would make the best of their way to Paris.

I now bethought me, that if, by the mistake or rascality of the guide, the baggage of the Protestants had fallen into the hands of the enemy, my whole little fortune would have been also swept away, and that I should have been left nearly in the same condition as that in which I had joined the army. How to remedy this, and to put my treasure beyond the chances of war, I did not know; but to consult Martin Vern seemed the surest plan of obtaining good advice, and he immediately proposed that I should place the money in his hands, which, as he explained to me, was the common custom with those who had floating sums which they wished to put in security.

As, from all I had seen, I had not the slightest doubt of the good man's integrity, I acceded without hesitation, but only asked, "Are you not more likely to lose it in travelling through the country unprotected, than even I am in the midst of an army?"

"Not a single crown of it," he said, laughing, "will ever go out of this camp. The Prince de Condé will have it all, and glad to get it. He is to receive two hundred thousand crowns at Niort, from a Jewish house with whom you yourself have had some dealings; part of the sum is on my account, and gold and silver plate to the full amount is by this time in my brother's hands in Paris. The Prince will be glad enough to have your six thousand crowns in ready money, instead of my bill upon Niort, which is the only way I should pay him. I give you an acknowledgment for the money, payable

on demand; and if you should want it, or any part of it, you have nothing to do but to show my acknowledgment to any banker or merchant, and draw upon me what is called a bill of exchange. Were it not for these bills, my good young friend, in such troublous times as the present, no merchant would venture to stir out of his own city, for fear of being skinned alive on account of the money on his person."

On this explanation, the money was soon sent for and readily found; for my baggage had all been collected together round the tent, and the ground in the immediate vicinity was kept clear by my own people. After paying over to Martin Vern the six thousand crowns, deducting the sum that I had sent him for the redemption of the knife, there still remained in my hands nearly five hundred crowns; and, with many thanks, I repaid to the good pastor, La Tour, the sum I had borrowed from him on quitting the château of Blancford.

"I would not take it from you, my son," he said, "but I see your exertions have been blessed with success, and that you have already become what I may well consider enormously rich."

I would not tell him how changed my estimation of enormous riches was, as I could not explain to him—perhaps not even to myself,—the causes of that change; but, even while we were speaking upon this subject, a message from the Prince de Condé came to the tent, seeking his Intendant and Martin Vern, who accordingly sped away in all haste to confer with that general.

"Will you let some of your men carry this gold for me?" said Martin Vern, adding, with a smile, "This will insure me a mighty warm reception from his highness."

Taking care that he should have a sufficient escort, I turned when the merchant was gone, to his nephew, and asked him how he relished the thoughts of this immediate journey to Paris, and whether his military ardour was or was not at an end. To my surprise, however, I found that he was as much changed in some of his

feelings as I was in some of mine; and for the first time I learned the cause of his whole conduct.

"You must know," he said, "that when I was living in Bordeaux, not long before my father's death, we became acquainted with a merchant's widow and her daughter, so well to do in the world, that it was proposed I should marry the young lady. She was very beautiful; and I fancied myself desperately in love with her. Indeed, I believe I was so; but she had got her head filled with ideas of battles and military glory; and though she coquetted with me a good deal, and gave me every encouragement, so as to raise my passion to the highest pitch, yet she declared that she would never give her hand to any one but a soldier, or one, at least, who had seen some service. If I would go and fight, she said, for two or three campaigns, she liked me well enough to promise to marry me; but she would not consent upon any other condition. My father was so enraged that he broke off the match altogether; and, dying shortly after, left me under the charge of my uncle, who was even more averse to it than himself. I could not see with their eyes at first, and thought of nothing but how beautiful she was; but, afterwards, when I had done quite enough to show that it was not fear prevented me from being a soldier, and was lying at Angoulême in sickness and in pain, I began to think that she must have been a very selfish and inconsiderate person, to wish me to expose myself to such things for the mere gratification of her vanity. If she loved me at all, she ought to have loved me sufficiently as I was,—plain Martin Vern; and if she did not love me as I was, and could love nothing but a soldier, why, a soldier let her have. As time went by, and I had plenty of opportunity of thinking, as you know, I began to find out that I had not loved her as much as I thought; and not at all doubting that the quality she most loved in a soldier, was a slashed pourpoint and the feather in his cap, I began *to think* the only quality that I had liked

in her was a pair of rosy lips and a pink and white complexion; and, therefore, as soon as my uncle proposed it, I expressed myself quite willing to go on with him to Paris."

There was something amusing to me in the sort of debtor and creditor account the young man seemed to keep with his own heart; but as it was now beginning to wax late, I did my best to provide accommodation for all the friends around me, and telling La Tour that I had a scheme for gaining some information, the next morning, concerning the Baron and his party, I led him to another tent, leaving good Dame Marguelette where she was, and took my station by one of the watch-fires for the night.

The complete knowledge that we have of any little stratagem that we attempt, makes us always fear more than necessary that it will be suspected by others; but on the present occasion, I was not wrong in supposing that an attempt might be made by the enemy to discover the amount of the force upon these heights. It was even probable that the extent of ground which we occupied might create suspicion, as the position of the Admiral and the Prince de Condé was accurately known and it was not probable that they should weaken themselves by suffering a large detachment to occupy the hill. However, I caused a number of saddled horses and armed men to wait at the point where our camp was most easily approached, and I remained by the side of the fire, wrapped in my cloak, dozing, perhaps, a little, but more frequently gazing upon the red embers and thinking of the fate of my sweet Louise.

Moric Endem, who had kept watch there during my absence, left me in about half an hour, to get some refreshment. He was long ere he returned; and I cannot say that good Moric was ever famous for shortening his potations. When he did come back, he cast himself *down* at the other side of the fire; and fell as sound asleep on the hard ground, in the face of the enemy, as

if he had been in the warmest bed of a well-fenced château. About five o'clock in the morning, having no more wood to trim the fire, which was beginning to grow very dull, I rose up and went out beyond the barricade that we had constructed, gazing up at the stars, which were shining in all the clear brightness of a frosty night.

As I so gazed, I thought I heard sounds from below; and, looking down the slope, I clearly saw a body of horse and foot advancing slowly and silently towards our little camp. Going back quietly in haste, I woke Moric Endem, got the men together without any noise, stationed the arquebusiers amongst the carts and waggons, with directions for no one to fire till the general order should be given; and then causing my troopers to mount, I brought them close to the spot by which they could issue forth upon the enemy. I could there, also, see the Catholics as they approached; and suffering them to advance till within the distance of fifty or sixty yards from the camp, I stood a little forward, like a sentinel, and challenged them. They made no answer, but only quickened their pace; but then, instead of discharging my arquebuse, as a sentinel would have done, and leaving any one who liked it to follow my example according to the common custom, I gave the word to fire, and in a moment a line of sharp flashes ran along the face of the carts and waggons, and, springing on my horse, I led out the men, and charged the advancing body down the hill. As well as I could see, I singled out their commander, with the hope of making him prisoner, for the body was evidently nothing more than a reconnoitring party, and not much stronger numerically than my own.

The surprise—for they had not calculated upon such a reception,—the darkness, to fight in which they were altogether unaccustomed; and, as I imagine, a want of complete knowledge of the ground, rendered the resistance of the enemy but momentary; and we drove infantry and cavalry *down* the hill together, at the point of the

spear, bearing to the Catholic camp, and to Martigue, who had sent them, a somewhat exaggerated account, I have a notion, of the strength upon the hill. I somehow missed the commander in the dark; but I struck one man from his horse as he fled, with the staff of my lance, and then pointing the iron to his throat, made him surrender, rescue or no rescue, and gave him into the hands of the people who followed. We pursued the reconnoitring party as far, or perhaps farther, than was prudent; and then returning, I ordered the prisoner to be brought up to a somewhat better-lighted fire than the one I had been sitting at, and asked him the questions which I had proposed.

I found that he was a common soldier, though of good family; and on inquiring strictly in regard to the Baron de Blancford and his party, he said that he had heard a report in the corps to which he belonged, of that nobleman having either come in and surrendered himself, or having been made prisoner, with a promise of safety, by some of the roving parties of the left wing. He described to me, pretty accurately, the part of the camp where he imagined the Baron to be lodged; and as his own regiment could not be far from the spot, I took it for granted that he was right. I then put him at a small ransom for the sake of the men, and let him go upon parole; having taken especial care that he should see nothing around him but the grim faces of steel-clad horsemen, and the lighted matches of the arquebusiers.

By the time that all this was accomplished, the eastern sky was beginning to grow grey, and a faint buzzing murmur seemed to me to indicate some early movement in the enemy's camp, although the light was not yet sufficiently strong for any eye to discern what was taking place. The murmur increased and strengthened; but of course I could make no attempt in such circumstances without orders, and I sent down a messenger immediately to tell the Prince de Condé what had occurred, and to ask for his instant commands. The

reply was short; and written on a scrap of paper, with a piece of black chalk.

"I think the enemy are decamping," the note said: "if it should prove so, take what men you have, as soon as it is daylight, and hang upon the rear. You shall be joined by fifty more as speedily as possible,—all under your command. But be not too rash; for it is now determined not to risk a battle till the season is more advanced."

Before the messenger with this notification reached me, what the Prince de Condé had foreseen became evident. By the grey light of the morning, I could see the spears of the retreating army already winding along the opposite hill, within two miles of the outposts of the Admiral. There was a thick white mist in the valley, however, which covered the Catholic camp, and prevented me from distinguishing what had taken place there; but I judged, from the distance at which the cavalry were now seen, that their retreat might be considered as secure.

Giving orders to Moric Endem to get every man that he could muster under arms as fast as possible, I ran to the tent of good old La Tour, and besought him not to quit the army till my return, when I would bring or send him some news of the Baron and his family. Martin Vern I had not an opportunity of seeing, though I trusted that, as he had all my little wealth, and had not even given me such a receipt as he had promised, I should find him on my return. Not that I in the slightest degree doubted his honesty or honour, but that I knew I might have need of a part of what I had given him at a moment's notice. No time, however, was now to be lost; and, getting into the saddle as speedily as possible, I put myself at the head of my men and of the horse arquebusiers, and dashed down into the enemy's camp at full speed. A portion of the baggage, and that in some degree valuable, was left; and Moric Endem, whom I had jestingly named the Plunder-master-general, as he

conducted all that part of our military proceedings, made a goodly booty in less than half an hour.

Ere we reached the end of the valley in pursuit, a body of twenty more spears and some arquebusiers joined us, sent according to his promise by the Prince de Condé, and their leader brought me an order to follow the enemy as far as possible, and not to leave them unless I was compelled, till they were two days' march from their former camp. I had neither tents nor any other kind of baggage with me, and for a moment thought of sending back to bid the servants and horse-boys follow; but recollecting of how much importance it was to lose no time, I urged on the pursuit, and speedily overtook a small body straggling from the rear-guard, whom we drove in upon the rest at the point of the spear.

The appearance of the horse-arquebusiers behind us, for they had not been quite so rapid in their movements as the men at arms were, gave the idea of a much more considerable body of pursuers than really followed the enemy; and a small troop of cavalry faced about and charged. Amongst them was a mere youth; but the whole were routed in a moment, and the boy, thrown to the ground, was absolutely under my horse's feet. How he escaped unhurt I do not know; but I helped him to rise, and, scarcely thinking what I did, but looking on him as a mere child, I bade him remount his horse, and get back as fast as he could. He took me at my word, and I did not see him again, though more than once during the rest of the day we met a body of the enemy in pretty sharp encounter.

During that night, I slept at a small village somewhat in the rear of the enemy; and on the following day found it necessary to urge the pursuit somewhat more cautiously, for here we were, in all not one hundred and twenty men, nearly thirty miles distant from the Protestant army, and without anything to fall back upon. To cut off stragglers, therefore, was all that we could *do; but* towards evening we took some prisoners,

from whom I learned tidings that I was anxious to obtain.

The Duke of Anjou had by this time halted and encamped for the night; and the prisoners informed me that they belonged to the regiment of Monsieur de la Vallette. On questioning them concerning the Baron de Blancford, one of them, who seemed their leader, assured me that he knew that gentleman and all his family were detained as prisoners by the Duke of Montpensier. He seemed a somewhat willing prisoner, the man added, and was not guarded at all strictly, but left under the eyes of the Marquis de la Vallette and his regiment. Their tents, he said, were on the extreme verge of the camp, to the right of the line of march; and the ease of carrying off the whole party seemed to me so great, that I determined to make the attempt that night.

We were still at some distance from the camp; but to make the enterprise more secure, I retired a little farther still, to a village called Scorbe, and there remained quiet, waiting with not a little impatience for the first hour of night, which, as I well knew, is of all others the time when a camp is left most exposed,—when the men, first feeling themselves relieved from the vigilance, activity, and labour of the day, are thrown more completely off their guard than at any other period.

Here, in the mean time, I made all my arrangements with Moric Endem and the leader of the arquebusiers. The prisoners were safely locked up in a barn belonging to a neighbouring farm, and their horses, appropriated to our use, were destined to act a part which will speedily be seen.

CHAPTER XI.

It was intensely cold when, just as it was turning dusk, we set out from the little village upon our projected expedition. The ground was as hard as iron, every stream was held in icy shackles, and there was a dull stillness in the air as if even the very sounds were frozen. The shrill wintry melody of the robin had ceased, the lowing of the cattle was over, and the crowing of the watchful cock heard in some far distant farm, which once, and once only, broke the stillness as we proceeded, made it seem more profound the moment the sound had ceased. Notwithstanding the intensity of the cold, or rather, perhaps, as a consequence of it, the whole ground was covered with a light white mist. It could not be called a fog; and yet it, together with the duskiness of the hour, rendered all the surrounding objects difficult to be seen, magnifying them in size, and even seeming to distort them in shape. There was no wind to move the light vapoury cloud that lay upon the surface of the earth; but as we rode on, sometimes climbing high up over the slopes where the ground was more clear, we could see the distant stars peeping through with a faint and doubtful glimmer; but whenever we were upon the low grounds, nothing whatever could be seen around us at a greater distance than twenty yards.

The arrangements which I had made were, that Moric Endem, myself, and eight others, should keep in advance of the party till we came near the camp of the enemy. I was then to go on alone, endeavouring to find out the tents which the prisoner had described as the lodging of the Baron de Blancford. As soon as we had found it, I was to return and draw up my men; the greater part of them with the arquebusiers were to remain in the nearest sheltered spot I could find, and five or six others holding

saddled horses, on two of which I had contrived to place pillions for Louise and the Baroness, were to be as near as I could bring them with safety to the camp. Having arranged all this, I and the nine who had accompanied me in advance were to dismount, and taking upon our backs some sacks stuffed with straw, which we had brought from the village, we were to walk forward and attempt to enter the camp as a foraging party.

I felt sure that the enemy, having now discovered that they were not followed by the bulk of the Protestant army, would be, as indeed they always were, in a very lax and careless state, and I doubted not that the word would never be asked, and that we should be admitted without difficulty. In the first instance, however, the whole party had nearly been discovered, for in the darkness and the mist, instead of coming upon the tents where we should have seen lights more readily, we suddenly found ourselves at the back of a village which was stationed at the head of the right wing, and the loud sound of merriment from within was the first thing that gave us any intimation of our danger.

Drawing back as quietly and stealthily as possible, we passed round a small bank of osiers that grew by a little stream, and then clearly distinguished the tents to which I had been directed, by the lights which were seen scattered here and there, and which seemed dim and enlarged through the mist. I now found the description which the man had given, so accurate, that I could tell perfectly where I was, at every step; and numbering the tents onward, from a large pavilion belonging to Martigue, the fiftieth tent on that side, brought me to the spot where the Baron de Blancford was said to be lodged.

We had ridden slowly along, skirting the bank of osiers which I have mentioned, upon a little eminence between it and the enemy's camp; and stationing my arquebusiers and spare lances behind, with the led horses, just covered by the brow, the party assigned to

enter the camp, dismounted. Taking our sacks upon our backs, we approached the tents; and, to say the truth, the enterprise was somewhat hazardous to the undertakers thereof, and somewhat rash. We had to recollect that, if we were taken, though we were in arms, and had every signal of the Protestant party about us, yet it was not at all improbable that, in those days, we should be hanged at once for spies. However, we were not persons to be much daunted by the thought of consequences, and we walked boldly forward towards the tents.

As we had skirted along from the village, to the spot where I had halted the chief body of my men, we had seen nothing to give us any alarm. The buzz, the noise, the merriment of a camp were heard, it is true, but were heard from a distance; and where we were, reigned all the stillness and quietness of the suburb, as it were. No sight was to be seen indicating human life, except, every now and then, beheld through the canvas street, some tall form, magnified by the mist, either accidentally crossing the light of a watch-fire, or bending down to stir it into a brighter blaze. Not a soldier who could help it, put out the unsheltered head in that intense frost; and as the wine in the neighbourhood was cheap and abundant, every opportunity had been given by the generals to keep up the warmth of the body, by deep potations taken in the tents and houses.

Fixing upon the tents which I conceived to be assigned to the Baron de Blancford, and which I had been told were six in number, I gave Moric Endem and Andriot, who accompanied me, full directions what to do on their part, while I, with two of the other men, proceeded to the principal tent, to liberate the Baron and his family. Bearing, then, our sacks upon our shoulders, we approached a little breast-work which seemed to have been constructed on some former occasion, and entered a gap therein, when a soldier, who had been sitting in the *ditch beyond*, started up with his pike in his hand, and

demanded the pass-word. I murmured out something that he did not hear, keeping myself prepared, however, in case he persisted, to cut him down at once; but he seemed little disposed to take any very exact note of our proceedings; and seeing the sacks, he took us, as I hoped he would, for a foraging party; and, consequently, suffered us to pass, without making me repeat the word more than once, though I cannot suppose that my reply was at all like it. As soon as we were within the camp, each man applied himself to his task, and, without taking any note of what the others were about, I, with two stout fellows behind me, approached the largest of the tents, and throwing down our sacks, I pulled back the canvas and entered. The moment that I did so, I found that I was so far right. The Baron de Blancford was before me, seated at a table with wine upon it, and some dried fruit. He was quite alone, without even a page; but there was a division in the tent, and I concluded the rest of his family were in the chamber beyond.

Immediately on the entrance of myself and my two followers, he rose and looked at us with some surprise, demanding, "What want you, gentlemen? Do you come from the Duke of Montpensier?"

Holding up my finger for the purpose of making him understand not to speak loud, I raised the visor of my casque, saying, "My lord, I heard you were a prisoner, contrary to the tenor of the safe conduct which you bear, and therefore I have come at once to liberate you. Horses and guards are waiting. If you choose to embrace the opportunity, you may be free at once."

I never in my life beheld utter astonishment so completely depicted on a human countenance, as on his.

"Henri de Cerons," he exclaimed, gazing at me as if he could scarcely believe his eyes, "is this true? can this be true? or is it a dream?"

"It is true, my lord," I replied, "perfectly true. But we have no time to lose, if you would take advantage of the moment of escape. My men are preparing your

servants, and I will ensure your perfect safety to the camp of the Prince de Condé."

He still continued to gaze at me for a moment, as if he yet could scarcely convince himself that it was all true; but the next instant he asked, "And do you really still, Henri, take such an interest in me and mine, as to risk your life to free us?"

"Indeed, my lord, I do," I replied. "I believe you have not understood me rightly in former days; but my love and gratitude to you, and others that are gone, believe me, are quite as lively as any one could require or wish."

He seemed somewhat touched, and mused a moment; but, just as he was about to reply, the Baroness entered from the inner part of the tent, and in an instant the evil spirit seemed to come over him again.

"No," he said, "no; I must not and I cannot go. They detain me only till they ascertain the accuracy of my safe conduct. No, sir: I fear you have taken this trouble for nothing."

"Are you, my lord, quite decided?" I said; "for this can never be risked again. Every moment that I stay here is, as you know, full of peril; but the moment is before you, if you choose to seize it."

While I was speaking, the Baroness came round the table towards me, gazed in my face with a look of coquettish wonder, and, ere her husband could answer, exclaimed, "Good heavens! this is the young gentleman who only suffered one to see him for a moment at Blancford; and has he really had the generosity to come hither in order to rescue us?"

"Whatever he has come here for, madam," answered the Baron, "he comes, as you well know, in vain; for of course we must remain with the King's troops, till the authenticity of our safe conduct is ascertained."

"Nay, but speak gently, Baron," said the lady, "speak gently, for pity's sake. Surely you are indebted to him."

"*I am,*" said the Baron, "but—"

At that moment, close to where we stood, burst forth the report of a pistol-shot, with some loud tongues speaking.

"Come you or not, my lord?" I cried; "this is the last moment."

"Of course I come not," replied the Baron. "Go go, Henri," he added, with a momentary emotion of feeling: "I thank you, I thank you, but I cannot come."

I left the tent instantly, with some disappointment that, even in that short moment, I had not beheld Louise. The moment I was beyond the canvas walls, however, the voice of Moric Endem met my ear, and I darted towards the spot where we had left the sentry.

"This way, sir, this way," cried Moric, as soon as he perceived me by the light of the fire; "I have been obliged to shoot the pikeman, and we shall have them all upon us in a minute. See, see, there are some fellows coming up there. Are not your friends ready?—Then you must leave them; for by heavens we shall have hot work before we make our escape."

"They do not come, Moric, they do not come," I cried, hurrying on towards the gap. "Could you not have dealt with him more quietly? Fire-arms make such a noise."

"He kept me off with his pike," said Moric, speaking as we hurried along, "and if I hadn't shot him he would have stopped the lady."

"What lady, in the name of Heaven?" I exclaimed, pausing in astonishment, when Moric seized me by the arm, saying,

"Come on, come on, my lord! There's no stopping to think now!—I mean the lady Andriot brought out."

I paused not an instant longer, but hurried on like lightning to the spot where the led horses were held. The mist prevented me from seeing anything till I was close upon them; but then, to my confusion and consternation, I beheld seated on the pillion behind the lad, Andriot, the light, beautiful figure of Louise de Blanc-

ford, with no other covering against the cold of the night but a thick veil thrown over her head.

"Good God!" I exclaimed, running up, "they have made a mistake, Louise;—dear Louise, your father will not come, and to take you back would cost my life and that of every one with me."

"Then you shall not go, Henri," she said, instantly recognising me, and holding out her arms towards me; "you will take care of me, you will protect me till I can go back to my father in safety."

"But you are not dressed, dear child, for such a night as this," I cried. "Where is my horse? Give me the cloak from the saddle-bow."

And throwing it over her shoulders I was clasping it around her neck, when Moric Endem shook me violently by the arm, exclaiming, "Mount, mount, Seigneur de Cerons, and begone! They are already in the saddle and after us!"

I sprang upon my horse's back in a moment, snatched my spear from one of the boys, and, turning to Andriot, exclaimed, "Do you know the way exactly back to the village of Scorbe?"

"Every step, sir," he answered, boldly.

"Away, then!" I cried, "away, on before! You, Moric, and the rest accompany the lady and protect her. I will soon make these pursuers turn upon their steps."

"I stay with you, sir," replied Moric. "Arlivault and the rest on with the lady and the boy!"

Andriot, who was an excellent horseman, dashed down the side of the hill, crossed the little stream, and away over the lea, while I with Moric galloped down to the arquebusiers by the osier bank, and the body of lances that I had left at the corner. We had scarcely reached them when the horses of the pursuers stopped upon the brow of the hill, and though we could not see them, we could hear them shouting, as they turned towards the camp, "Torches! bring torches! They

must be down here! They cannot escape. There are many on foot, for we saw them!"

A minute after, a glare of light, as of a number of links and torches, appeared coming up from the camp, and we could see the figures of some fifteen or twenty men at arms on horseback, shining out upon the red back-ground of the mingled mist and torch-light.

"Now, arquebusiers," I said, "give them one volley, then quick upon your horses, and off back to the village."

The fire-arms were lowered in a moment, and, just as some fresh men, to the amount of twenty or thirty more, were coming over the slope, our osier bank blazed with a long line of fire. Down went five or six of the coming horses and men, and the arquebusiers springing on their horses obeyed the orders they had received.

"What say you, lances?" I cried. "We will never ride off without striking a blow."

"Upon them, upon them, lucky captain," cried the men; and, though we had the hill against us, we galloped up with our lances levelled upon the enemy, who were already in a state of hesitation and confusion from the unexpected fire they had encountered, and who began to fly at the very sound of charging horse, which they could not see sufficiently to distinguish the numbers. In this terrible state we drove them in, one tumbling over the other, horses and torches, and officers and men, all well nigh frightened out of their wits, and more than one meeting the fate of a coward by the stroke of a lance in the back. One man had brought out, it would seem, with him the cornet of his troop, and had very nearly got into the gap in safety; but I was up with him just as he was struggling to push his way forward before the other fugitives. I caught hold of the standard pole; and, raising the staff of my lance in my hand, I struck him a blow upon the cowardly head that felled him to the earth.

"Here, take the cornet, Moric," I cried. "And now, my men, we will wish them good night."

A loud laugh burst from those who heard me, which, I believe, impressed upon the flyers a notion that we were perfectly secure in our numbers, more than any other part of the affray, and I heard afterwards that it was reported in the camp of the Duke d'Anjou, that I had beat up the quarters of La Valette with five hundred men.

We then passed the stream and the osier bank in safety, and whether we were again pursued or not during that night I cannot tell. With the horse arquebusiers we easily came up, for they had lingered a moment or two upon the opposite slope, with some anxiety about our fate; but we rode on for some way afterwards without seeing anything of Louise or her escort, and I began to feel apprehensions lest they should have missed their way. The fog was increasing in density, the frost was most intense, and, though more than once we halted to listen if horses' feet could be distinguished, not a sound broke the stillness of the night.

We had ridden about a league and a half, and it now became a question, for a moment, whether we were ourselves on the right road, but the unfailing sagacity of Moric Endem pointed out marks which proved that we were not mistaken. There was a tree here that looked like an old suttling woman, with a bottle under her arm; there was a small *maiterie* there with some trees round it, which looked like a partridge garnished with endive, and on we went in perfect security upon our road for two or three miles further.

"Hark!" cried Moric Endem, as we were going over a gentle slope: "there was a pistol-shot, far off to the left. It may be a signal that they have lost their way."

We halted and listened, and, as the wind, though very light, was from that side, I thought I heard the sound of horses' feet. I bade them then fire an arquebuse in return, and two minutes after another pistol-shot was heard, which at once confirmed the supposition of Moric *Endem.*

Turning our horses that way with a shout and a halloo, we rode on as fast as we could, and, at the distance of about two miles to the left of the true road, we came up with a party which proved to be that we were in search of. Riding up to the side of Louise, I bestowed not a few harsh words upon Master Andriot for having misled the party, and then, taking Louise's hand in mine, I said everything in order to make her comfortable and put her mind at ease that the circumstances permitted, being surrounded by a number of people who heard every word that was spoken. Her hand was like a piece of ice, and I found that she was suffering much from the intense cold, yet how to assist her I could not tell. I became, I confess, greatly alarmed about her: nor were my fears without some foundation; for, two or three days before, I had seen the hands of one of our men so completely frost-bitten as to require the amputation of two of the fingers. Nothing, however, was to be done but to ride on as fast as possible, and yet we were all so far from the right road that the time of our journey to the village must necessarily be lengthened, and was, in some degree, uncertain.

After riding on for about three miles more, however, I saw a long building on the left, and on a nearer approach found that it was one of those large granaries or barns which are found scattered about so frequently in Poitou and Sainctonge at great distances from any habitation. Though it was a miserable shelter enough, yet, as it promised to afford us a covering against the intense cold, I turned our horses' heads thither, saying that, at all risks, we must break it open, in order to obtain some shelter for the young lady. Not a little to my satisfaction, however, the door was found unlocked, and the place completely vacant, and, on entering, we found that it was divided into two by a wooden partition, which separated a small space, in the shape of an ordinary room, from the great barn and threshing-floor. This we discovered by lighting two or three coils of

match that we had brought with us, and lifting Louise from her horse I carried her into the inner room in my arms, for she was so stiff with the cold that she could hardly move.

Soldiers may, doubtless, have a multitude of faults, but the tenderness and care that they can, sometimes, exhibit towards the weak and the suffering, form a strange contrast, occasionally, with the savage fury they display under excitement. Nothing could exceed the kindness, the diligence, the attention with which they crowded round to give assistance to poor Louise; one cheering her with a kindly word, another bringing in the pillions to make a comfortable seat for her, a third rushing in with his arms full of apple branches, which he had torn down from the neighbouring trees, and which, placed on a hearth that we found in the inner room, soon raised a cheerful and a blazing fire. Moric Endem, for his part, brought from his saddle-bow an appendage without which he never travelled, and which, on the present occasion, proved of the utmost service. This was one of the gourds dried in the form of a bottle, and filled with excellent wine, and I insisted upon Louise drinking some of the contents, which, I believe, more than anything, prevented her from suffering severely.

Some more piles of wood were soon brought in, together with some other cloaks, and Moric and the rest, having seen that everything had been done to make Louise as comfortable as the circumstances permitted, retired into the larger division of the barn, to provide, as best they might, for the passing of a long winter's night, Moric leading the way, and saying, "Better leave the seigneur and his cousin alone. I dare say they have a great deal to say to each other."

"Is he her cousin?" I heard one of the men ask, as they went out, turning at the same time to Andriot; "I thought most likely he was her lover."

"*He* is her cousin," replied Andriot. "You might

almost call them brother and sister, indeed, for they have been like such all their lives."

I had, indeed, always felt so towards Louise de Blancford; I had loved her as a very dear sister, with whom no word had ever been exchanged but that of kindness and affection, and such had been simply my sensations till the moment when, quitting her father's house, I sought my own fortunes in the wide world. I have said, then, that a dream came up before my eyes, that a vision of future happiness connected itself with the remembrance of Louise, that I felt that I could not be happy, that I could not even figure to myself a state of happiness without the dear, the beloved companion of my infancy and my youth.

From that moment, new and deeper feelings began to mingle with the memory of Louise; hopes and visions, and fancies bright and enchanting, dreams of joy and satisfaction in meeting her again; aspirations to conquer every difficulty and overcome all resistance, till I had raised myself high, for her sake. Was this love, or merely a dream of the fancy,—a boyish fondness for the girl that had been brought up with me? I cannot well tell, but I think not; for love can have no greater intensity of regard and affection than I felt towards Louise de Blancford: imagination might gild it; but does not imagination gild love also? It wanted something, indeed. I had looked upon Louise with fondness, I can scarcely say that it was with admiration, for I had been so much accustomed to the sight of her beauty that I did not know how beautiful she was, even as a girl, till afterwards in comparing the beauty of others whom I saw with her image in my memory, I found that there was none at all like her.

If there was anything wanting, however, to render that which I felt towards her love of the deepest, the most intense, the tenderest, the most passionate nature, it was wanting no longer after that night. The dear embrace which she had given me when first we met,

the touch of her hand when we came up with her after the little skirmish; the holding her in my arms and to my bosom, as I carried her from her horse into the building; the anxiety for her, the fear, the tenderness, the care, gave warmer, nearer, more engaging, if not more intense sensations to my affection for her; and from that moment I felt I loved her with all the fire and energy of passion.

By the warmth of the fire, Louise soon began to revive, her eyes to sparkle brightly again, and the natural colour to come into her lips and cheek. She had been scarcely able to speak when we entered, but now she answered my eager words kindly, though briefly, and added a bright smile, and let her hand press mine, to thank me more than she was able to do in words. Oh! how beautiful did she look then, as gradually the bright returning stream of life flowed more rapidly through her veins, and every moment seemed to bring out some new loveliness. I cannot but think that so must have looked the ivory statue of the Greek sculptor, when his prayer of love was heard, and it was kindled into sudden life. She was changed, much changed since last I saw her: she was now just sixteen; and what a difference one year will make at that period of life! every alteration had been an addition to the beauty that she possessed before: she was now a woman—when I had left her a girl, and the brightness of perfection had been added to the rich promise of beauty.

She seemed not to see or to feel that there was any change in me; the endearing names which we had used towards each other in youth, were still employed; the terms of love and deep affection were nothing new to us, and nothing strange; and while I called her "dear Louise,—my own Louise,—my sweet, dear girl," and used every term expressive of the fondest affection, it seemed all quite natural, and she murmured in reply, "Dear, dear Henri, how glad I am to see you again!"

I may own it, for it was all harmless and pure, my

lips were pressed on hers more than once, and her hand remained clasped in mine, while her head leaned upon my bosom. The casque I had laid aside at my first entrance, the iron cuirass soon became a load to me, and I threw it off also, and smiling at me as I did so, she said, "Ah, dear Henri, you now look more like what you did at Blancford."

I sat down beside her on the ground, near the fire, and chafed her hand, which was still cold, though not so intensely so as before, and in about an hour she was nearly well again. It seemed to me, however, that as she recovered from the effects of the cold, she became somewhat anxious and thoughtful, and she asked me many questions about the adventures of that night,—whether I had seen her father, and what he had said.

I told her all exactly as it had happened; but still she seemed anxious, and I said, "It will be easily explained, dear Louise, and your father will understand in a moment, that it was impossible to return when the alarm was once given."

"I am afraid," she said, hesitating, "I am afraid that the Baroness will say everything that is cutting and unkind. I know what she will say quite well. She will say, that I came away with you willingly enough, for she used always to speak in that manner at Blancford, after you went, and would never hear me mention your name, or look at all thoughtful, without saying, she was sure I wished to go and join you. She thus tried very much to make my father angry with me; but still he was not angry."

"And did you ever wish to come and join me, Louise?" I said.

There was a slight blush upon her cheek; but she answered at once, "I wished every day that you were there, Henri; for I have never had a happy hour since you were gone. We could not have been so happy, indeed, as we used to be, even had you been there, but still we might have had a few sweet hours together.

Now I am afraid—though I am sure I do not know what harm there is in being with you—she will say everything that is unkind if she finds that I am away with you, alone, for many days."

"Do not be afraid, sweetest," I replied; "to-morrow we shall arrive at our own camp, where you will find good Dame Marguelette and Monsieur La Tour. Under their protection no one can say anything; and for the night, dearest Louise, you shall be under mine, and let the man who dares, say that I do not protect you rightly —"

"Oh, that you will, that you will," she said, "I have not the least fear, Henri, with you; and I am sure, if good Monsieur La Tour be there, I shall like being with him much better than being near the Baroness."

Our conversation was interrupted by some one knocking at the door, and bidding him come in, Moric Endem presented himself, accompanied by Andriot and a good farmer of the country, whose face was somewhat pale, rather with surprise than fear, and who looked round the apartment with an inquiring glance, as if asking what he was to meet with next. They were all loaded with different sorts of provisions, however, and it soon appeared that Moric, well knowing that there must be some farm-house at not many miles' distance from the barn, had set out in search of one with Andriot, and a sufficient number of the soldiery to give force to his entreaties for hospitality.

The farm had been found more easily than they expected; the farmer and his wife were roused, and on the representation that there was a young lady in want of food and assistance, joined to a promise of prompt payment, the farmer was easily induced to rise, and bring forth everything that his house contained, which could afford us food or comfort. Heaps of blankets and coarse woollen cloths, piles of straw and hay, several large bottles and stoups of wine, a large pie not yet broken into, and sausages and *andouillettes* with bread,

and a jar of baked apples, had been brought down by the different men, for our comfort and consolation in the barn. It was about two miles, they said, to the farm-house, and the good farmer offered, with every show of readiness, to provide Louise with a lodging there till the next morning.

At first, the impression on my mind was, that notwithstanding the cold walk or ride, which she must take, it would be better for Louise, in every point of view, to go up to the farm at once. But I saw, by the sign the man made on entering the room in which we were, that he was a Catholic. I remembered the proximity of the Catholic army, too, and that it would be extreme cruelty to order any of the men in such a night as that, to keep watch round the house. I therefore thanked him for his offer, but declined it; and after having paid him handsomely for his trouble and attention, saw him depart, but not without bidding Moric Endem take some heed of which way he turned his steps.

My next care was to make a sort of temporary bed for my sweet cousin, and then having taken what portion of the provisions we wanted, and distributed the rest amongst the soldiery, I supped gaily and happily with Louise, and passed nearly two hours in conversation, sometimes, indeed, mingling sad things with sweet ones, but with many an affectionate word between. It was evident to me that Louise was unconscious of any change in her own feelings towards me, or in mine to her; and I blessed that unconsciousness, for it suffered a thousand little tender tokens of affection to display themselves openly in her conduct, which might have been driven back into the shy recesses of the heart, had she known the full strength of my sensations towards her. The only thought that seemed to have given her uneasiness, had been altogether removed by my telling her that we should join good La Tour on the following day, and the joy of our meeting again seemed chequered by nothing but some timid fears lest we should be pur-

sued, and overpowered by some force from the Catholic camp.

Thus passed the time brightly and happily, till at length the chimes of a distant clock, though we could hear it but faintly, told that one hour had passed after midnight. Rest, I knew, was needful to her, and I spread out the cloaks and blankets on the straw, so as to insure that no cold should there visit those young tender limbs, and piled up a quantity of wood upon the hearth, insuring the long continuance of the fire by burying a considerable part in the ashes.

I then took Louise in my arms, and kissed her, wishing her good night; but she seemed somewhat frightened at the idea of my leaving her, asking why I could not stay beside her, and sleep by the fire, too. I could have stayed and watched beside her with the greatest pleasure; but I would not have it said by any one that such had been the case. The men were still talking together in the next chamber; the door I had purposely left ajar, and pointing out to Louise, that the only window was up near the roof, through which no one could pass, I told her that I would lay myself down across her door till the morning, so that she might be sure no one could come in.

"Dear Louise," I said, "I must not stay, I ought not to stay with you."

I again held her for a moment to my heart; the colour had come up highly into her cheek, and she hid her face for an instant on my bosom.

"Thank you, Henri, thank you," she said, when she raised her head, still leaving her hand in mine. "You are good as well as kind." And from that moment, though she did not love me less, Louise felt that we could no longer be brother and sister to each other.

CHAPTER XII.

IT was with a feeling of some gladness, that after a long, and to my fair Louise, somewhat fatiguing march, I at length saw the camp of the reformed army occupying a position not very distant from that in which it had been placed when I left it. The convenience of the troops had of course been consulted, and the greater part of the army had been put into quarters, either in the town of Loudun, or in the villages round about. Three or four of these villages to the south-east of Loudun, had, indeed, been converted into one camp by long lines of tents, which served the soldiery for many of the occupations of the day, and here I saw the colours of the Prince de Condé, so that it was to the centre of this part of the army that I directed my progress, knowing that there my own tents and baggage would be found.

The frost was somewhat less intense, and the sun was shining clear and bright, when my little cavalcade approached a battery of three small pieces of artillery which defended the principal entrance of the village in the centre. It was a gay and cheerful scene, strife for a time had ceased, and the soldiers were amusing themselves, as best they might, though just on the outside of the camp the amusements that were going on were certainly all of an athletic kind, for it needed somewhat robust exercise to make the blood circulate freely in the terrible cold of that year. A considerable number of officers and gentlemen were gathered together near the battery I have spoken of, looking out over the wintry scene before them, and as my coming formed a little incident in the somewhat monotonous life they had led for the last two days, five or six of those who knew me came forth to shake hands, and to congratulate me on my safe return.

"Well, fortunate De Cerons," cried one, looking

somewhat earnestly at Louise, who had drawn the veil down her whole head and face as we approached, "you have made a fair booty, as usual."

He spoke with a smile, but I replied, "I sent all that I did get back to the camp the day before yesterday; but all that was found, was in the tents, I believe. I have been lucky enough, however, to rescue my fair cousin Mademoiselle de Blancford, from the hands of the Catholics, who had taken her prisoner, so I must see where I can find some sort of comfortable quarters. You have no idea, Monsieur de Luze, where my people are with the baggage?"

"Oh, the Prince de Condé has taken especial good care of you," said the other, laughing; "he has given you the house of a fat farmer there up at the end of the village, and a cottage close by it for your people. Montgomery wanted it, and half-a-dozen others, but he said you had done him as much service that night by your army of baggage-waggons on the hill, as if you had brought him up ten thousand men, and therefore having sent you to follow the enemy, he would be your quartermaster himself."

I thanked him for his information, and was riding on, but another stopped me, putting his hand upon the bridle, and asking, "Do you always go to war, brave de Cerons, with a *femme de chambre* in your suite?"

My cheek began to glow, for I thought he had applied that term to Louise: but he added immediately, "I do not know whether you are aware of it, but there are three or four *femmes de chambre*, with five or six old blue nosed serving men, and a good old clergyman, who preached us an excellent sermon yesterday, have taken possession of your quarters, right or wrong, though the Prince refused them to me and to Montgomery."

"That is your father's servants, and La Tour, and your own women, Louise," I said. "We must ride on and find them out. They will all be right glad to see you safe."

But I was destined to be stopped once more, for one of

the officers I had just passed, called after me as the troop rode in—"Hi, de Cerons! Hi! Where did you get this, that the man is carrying? Why, it is Martigue's own cornet!"

"It is his no longer," I answered; "but the fact is, I beat up their quarters in their camp last night. They came out after me, and we drove them back again, taking their cornet."

"You are certainly the luckiest man in the camp," cried another. But without waiting for any more observations, I rode on as quickly as possible towards the house which had been indicated as my quarters. It proved, however, that eager eyes had been looking out for my return, and before I had reached the farm-house, good La Tour was out and through the little gate of the court-yard to meet me. The old man's face sparkled with joy when he saw me, but ten times more when he saw Louise along with me; and he exclaimed, embracing me as closely as my iron covering would permit, "I should never do for a soldier, my dear Henri, I should never do for a soldier. I have been more anxious than you can conceive, every half hour. Every movement, I thought that it was either you returned, or some one to say that you had been killed or wounded."

"Oh, you would soon learn to forget such things, my good friend," I said. "But, dear La Tour, here is a poor girl who wants not a little comfort and consolation, so I will leave her with you for one hour to tell her own story and mine, too, and go and repeat my proceedings to the Prince de Condé."

"Ay, you must do so quickly," replied the old man; "for I hear he sets out for Niort either this night, or early to morrow-morning. But I will take care of this dear child till you come back, and—see, here comes Marguelette to welcome her mistress."

While Marguelette was literally shrieking with joy and surprise, I gave orders to Moric Endem to lodge the men, and to entertain the horse arquebusiers who

had been our companions at my expense, and then, with a boy to guide me, and one of my troop, carrying the cornet we had taken, behind me, I hurried on with all speed to an old sort of château, called the *manoir*, where the Prince had taken up his quarters. There were people hurrying about the place, preparing, it seemed, for departure; but on my being admitted, I found him sitting calmly with De Luze, who had joined him, and given the news of my return, before my appearance. There were several others present, and amongst them the famous Montgomery, better known for accidentally killing Henry II. king of France, than for all the bold, gallant, and chivalrous actions he performed, and one or two other gentlemen, all of whom looked as merry as might be.

"You find us laughing on your return, and left us laughing as heartily as we could, Monsieur de Cerons," said the Prince, "over the affair of the varlets and the baggage-waggons, and your most excellent and successful stratagem. One of Monsieur Coligny's band took an officer attached to the Duke of Anjou, and from him we have learned that the sight of that third camp, and a skirmish which took place in front of it, towards morning, was the absolute cause of the enemy decamping in such haste. But how have you fared since you went? We have taken care of you, you see, in your absence."

"I have fared extremely well, sir," I replied; "and have brought you a cornet which we took, and which some one says is Martigue's."

"Oh, it cannot be Martigue's," cried the Prince de Condé. "He would have charged to regain it, if it had cost him his life."

"But it was not taken in the pursuit," I said, "it was taken late last night. I determined to give them an *alerte* on their right wing, and was in their camp for some minutes."

"Are you mad, De Cerons?" exclaimed the Prince de Condé. "Why, gentlemen, I thought I was the maddest *man in* the army, and this good youth is determined to

outdo me, it seems. Give them an *alerte*, too, with less than a hundred and fifty men! Pray, how many did you bring back?"

"Every one I took, your Highness," I replied; "and with but one slight wound amongst them. It seems lucky that I have brought back Martigue's cornet, or I should not get credit for my tale, however simple it may be."

"Oh, you have full credit," replied the Prince de Condé; "and I was proposing now as the only reward that could be given you for your service three nights ago, to arm you a knight at once; but Montgomery asked me to stop a day or two."

"May I ask why?" I demanded, turning towards Montgomery, with some surprise.

"With no ill meaning, I can assure you, Monsieur de Cerons," replied Montgomery. "I thought if you were knighted for that exploit, the wags of the Court would call you the knight of the baggage-waggons."

"They must give him another name now, however," replied the Prince de Condé; "there lie the spurs; he shall have them on his heels this night, and they may call him the Chevalier *Alerte*, if they like."

I thanked the Prince, as may easily be supposed, for I imagine the time never was, and am certain it never will be, when any man of honour and courage could feel the touch of the sword upon his shoulder without sensations of joy and redoubled energy. I thought fit, in the first place, however, to let his Highness know upon what occasion I had so boldly entered the enemy's camp, lest the personal object that conducted me there might be considered as a diminution of any honour attached to the act: I accordingly gave a full account of the whole transaction, which seemed indeed rather to augment than decrease the approbation of the Prince. He paused and mused for some time, however, over the refusal of the Baron de Blancford to seize the opportunity of escape.

"It has long been reported," he said, at length, "that the Baron is wavering in his faith, both to God and to his fellows in arms. On my honour! it were but right to detain this fair lady as a hostage for her father's conduct. What say you, De Cerons?" he added, with a smile: "will you be her guardian?"

"I beseech your Highness," I replied, "not to think of such a thing. Indeed, I proposed to ask your Highness to send a flag to the Catholic camp, to inquire whether the Baron de Blancford is detained there as a prisoner or not; and to demand, that, if he be not there a captive, a safe conduct may immediately be granted to his daughter and his domestics, now in this camp, in order that they may join him without further delay. I will, at the same time, write to him, explaining the cause of his daughter's temporary absence, and I trust that your Highness will not refuse me this request."

"Certainly not, De Cerons," replied the Prince. "But if I do, you must not expect me to spare your good cousin; for his conduct has been most base in the whole of this affair, and he must hear that we consider it such."

"Oh, in that matter, be it as your Highness pleases," I replied; "I have neither wish, nor reason to wish, that he should be spared; though, perhaps, my Lord, there may be causes for his conduct that we do not know."

"So shall it be, then, De Cerons. I will give the order this night. But, by my faith! you must see to the execution of it yourself, for I set out to-morrow morning, two hours before daylight, for Niort, where I have business enough to do, in all conscience, during the five or six days that I shall be absent, to wring money from hard-handed usurers, and assistance from that great, but stony-hearted woman, Elizabeth of England, who sees right willingly the internal feuds of France, but will give no aid to those whose part she pretends to espouse, *till they* are driven to the last extremity."

"I had hoped, sir," I replied, "from what I heard from good Martin Vern, the merchant, that your Highness was likely to obtain some supplies more easily."

"He has done somewhat, he has done somewhat," replied the Prince; "and he deals liberally himself; but he is obliged to deal, on my part, with Jews and Lombards innumerable, and he has now gone to Paris, with but small hope of getting their bills discounted, except at exorbitant interest."

The news of Martin Vern having quitted the camp without giving me any acknowledgment whatever for the money he had received from me, was, as may be imagined, not very satisfactory to me; and I remained musing for a moment or two, while the Prince wrote the order that I had demanded, and made some memorandums in regard to what was to be done in carrying it into execution.

"Come, De Cerons," he said, in a light tone, after he had done, "you seem sad, my good friend. Kneel down here. We will make a knight of you before we part, as young knights, they say, are always gay-hearted. Condé shall strike the stroke, Montgomery shall buckle on the spurs, and, lo! here comes D'Andelot, who was dubbed by the hand of the great Francis himself on his first field of battle, to buckle on the sword."

Certainly it could scarcely be by hands more distinguished that the ceremonies of knighthood were performed; and I might well go back to my quarters with a heart rejoicing in having taken a step far higher than any I had previously reached in the career which I had chosen for myself. Out of the small stock that remained to me, I gave a hundred crowns amongst the men, as a largess on my knighthood, and then immediately sought the room in the farm-house where Louise had remained in conversation with good old La Tour and Dame Marguelette. Their rejoicing upon her arrival had, by this time, poured itself forth, and they now all gathered

round me, with the strange mixture of feelings which I knew existed in their bosoms. Those mingled feelings caused an odd confusion of manner, which can only be understood when we recollect that the persons who now surrounded me remembered me chiefly as a boy,—even as a child whom they had been accustomed to direct, exhort, and to control; and that now the very same people found him commanding, providing for, and protecting them, with a tone of independence and authority, and proofs of power and right, strangely opposed to all their former ideas.

The old pastor, though he certainly did not look upon me still as a boy, could scarcely understand how the men that he saw around me came to pay such instant deference to my orders; how one waited for my casque, another took off my cuirass, another asked me for one direction, and another sought orders on something else; and Dame Marguelette, for her part, would, I believe, willingly have patted my head when the helmet was taken off, and she saw again the brown curls that she used to twine round her fingers in my infancy. Louise alone seemed fully to look upon me as a man and a commander; but we must remember, that on my arm had she leant from her own childhood; that I had not only been her companion, but her counsellor and her protector; and that, side by side, with my greater strength and powers, she had grown up, like a violet under some taller shrub, shaded, but sheltered.

I found good old La Tour thoughtful, very thoughtful; and, at the meal which ensued, I remarked that he frequently laid down his knife and spoon, and fell into a deep reverie. Louise, on the contrary, was bright and happy, full of joy and satisfaction at being once more amidst those whom she loved best, though ever since the preceding night, a slight shade of timidity,—timidity shall I call it? no, it was not timidity, nor exactly tenderness, perhaps, but a depth, a profundity, a feeling-*ness of tone*,—mingled with all she said to me. Though

lour in her cheek became somewhat brighter, and
'e acquired a calm intensity of look when she
to me long upon any interesting subject; yet it
ident that the change in her feelings towards
s, if I may use a paradox, less complete, even
ı greater, than with the two others. *She* beheld
ih sensations which were only the expansion of
had gone before; *they* saw me under a point of
ltogether altered. I discovered the change in her
ıs more by one little trait than by anything else.
ı natural vanity I happened, during the meal, to
ın that the Prince de Condé—at that time the
ıero of the Protestant party—had just conferred
ne the order of knighthood with his own hand.
: started up with her eyes and her cheeks all glowing,
.th a look of joy and delight that can never pass
ıy mind. The tears of deep satisfaction were almost
ıwing her eyes, and the words of congratulation
ılmost too much for her lips; but she sat down
immediately, and only held out her hand to me.
me had been when she would have cast her arms
l my neck and kissed me while she wished me

:r supper I went round the quarters which had
.ssigned to me, and concluded all my arrangements,
ɔuise, fatigued as she had been during the preced-
ght and day, retired to rest soon after my return.
Marguelette and one of the maids who had been
ıer, slept in the same chamber, and retired at the
:ime, and good old La Tour and I were left alone.
certainly altogether unprepared for the conversa-
ıat was to ensue.

enri," he said, as soon as we were quite alone and
ɔor shut, "Henri, I am anxious for you and for
ɛ, most anxious for Louise." And as he spoke
was a sad and foreboding look about his eyes which
d that the anxiety he spoke of was deeper than
ɔs.

"Indeed!" I replied, with a thousand vague and unreal fears excited in a moment; "and what makes you so anxious, my dear friend? why are you troubled, La Tour? I have seen, indeed, that it is so, all supper time, I knew not why."

"O Henri," cried the old man, "does not your own heart tell you why? do not your own feelings at this moment?"

"No, indeed, my dear sir," I replied, "I have no such feelings at all, no such sensations; I know not what you allude to. It might, perhaps, be wrong to bring Louise away, and I would not have done it if there had been any choice. But she must have explained to you that it was done without my knowing it, and once done impossible to take her back."

"It is not that at all—it is not that at all, Henri," replied La Tour; "it is—it is," he continued hesitating, "it is that you love Louise, Henri, and that—" he paused for a moment or two, and then added, "it is useless to conceal it; you know it already, you guess it, you see it, even if she has not acknowledged it to you with her own lips;—it is that you love Louise, Henri, and that she loves you."

I might have replied that it was quite natural that it should be so; I might have replied that we had always loved each other, and that he knew it; but I would not have equivocated with that straightforward, honest, kind-hearted old man for the world, and I therefore answered him:—"Is that the cause, my good friend, why you are so grieved? In truth, I see not why it should so grieve you; nothing can be more natural than that it should be as it is. I affect not to deny that I love Louise to the full extent of your meaning. Whether she loves me or not, though I do believe, and hope she does, I can in no degree tell, for we never have spoken to each other on such a theme; but, even taking it for granted that she does, where is the terrible evil which should *make* our best and oldest friend look sad, and evidently

feel pained to behold two people, to whom he has been a father indeed, love each other mutually, dearly, and well?"

"It is because I love you both," replied La Tour. "You have been frank and honest with me, Henri, and your confidence shall never be ill rewarded, shall never be betrayed. But, oh, my son! how little do you yet know of the world's ways! You may have some small experience in arms; you may divine what other men learn of the military art; but of the world, Henri, of the world, you as yet know little, or you would, at once, see what it is that grieves me in your mutual love,—what it is that will render it the source of nothing but misery to you both. Say, Henri, what is it that you can expect, but that you should see the hand of Louise bestowed upon some other man, when her heart is yours?—What is then to be the result?"

"But my dear friend," I replied, "let me ask you in return one question—Why may I not obtain that hand myself?"

"You, Henri! you!" exclaimed the good pastor; "that, indeed, is a vain imagination. Can you entertain it for a moment? Do you think her father, wealthy, powerful, proud, will wed her to one who has nothing but his sword to depend upon, however good that sword may be? Ask yourself, Is such a thing probable? is it possible?"

"At present, certainly not," I replied, "but Louise is still young, quite in her youth. I have already been successful in an extraordinary degree, why may I not, step by step, advance in the same course, till a high point, both of fame and of wealth, is obtained. Why may not I, though without the birth of a Condé, indeed, raise myself as high as he has done, who set out in life poorer even for a prince than I am for a gentleman? Why may not I build up a new house, like my great ancestor, the Count de Cerons, who founded the noble house to which I belong, with nothing but his sword?"

"True, he did so," replied La Tour, "and you may do the *same; but* recollect, Henri, that your grandfather

alienated the estates and barony of Blancford to a younger brother, to support the cause for which he fought; that your father did the same, and that the trade of war, like every other trade, is now great gain, and now heavy loss, but with this difference, that accident in war mingles in a tenfold proportion. Remember that here is a game in which there is always an important and heavy chance against the player. But, granting that fortune favours you to the utmost and to the end; that you acquire wealth, honour, and distinction; granting, too—which may well be granted,—that Louise would willingly wait till all this was accomplished, think you that her father will wait? think you that he will patiently reserve his daughter for one towards whom he cannot help feeling respect and esteem, but for whom he has shown no great affection throughout the whole course of his life? Can you say, Henri—to put it in one word,—can you say that he will not, to-morrow, promise the hand of Louise to another? can you be sure that he has not already promised it?"

There was something in the old man's manner which seemed to imply more than his words expressed; and, determined to come to the point at once, I rose, and took his hand in mine.

"What is it you mean, La Tour?" I said. "There is something you would warn me of; there is something upon your mind. Speak out,—speak plainly. We have always been honest and true towards each other; let us be so, I beseech you, still."

"There is no reason why I should not be so towards you," replied La Tour; "no pledge has been extorted from me, no promise of secrecy has ever been asked. The Baron, then, does destine Louise's hand to another. He has even, I believe, promised it."

His words fell like drops of molten fire upon my heart; they were agony to me; they were beyond all agony I had ever felt before. "To whom?" I said, "to whom?"

"To the Seigneur de Blaye," replied the good clergyman; "a Catholic, a persecutor, an enemy of the faith

that we ourselves profess, but wealthy, powerful, handsome, brave, nobly connected,—"

I stamped my foot angrily upon the ground, exclaiming, "A libertine, a debauchee, a sot, and a fool!"

"Indeed!" exclaimed the clergyman. "But how do you know all this, Henri de Cerons? Let not jealousy, my son, ever tempt you to take away the reputation of another; there is a great commandment against it. How can you know all this, I demand, Henri?"

"Because," I replied, "he was my prisoner and my guest for several days; and, during that time, he lived a life of folly, intemperance, and vice, which would have shamed the lowest debauchee in the most corrupt capital of Europe."

"Alas, alas!" said the old clergyman, "you now do make me tenfold unhappy, indeed, Henri. I know you would not pervert the truth, on any account, and yet I would fain believe that this terrible tale might be untrue."

"It is as true as I live!" I replied, vehemently. "Does Louise herself know of this proposed marriage? Has she ever seen the man they seek to make her wed?"

"Never," replied La Tour; "nor does she know aught of it. He is distantly related to the Baroness. She, doubtless, has managed the whole, and all I know is, that, on the application of this young lord, the Baron replied, that his daughter was still too young to wed, or even to think of marriage. What more he added I know not; but I understood that expectations, if not promises, were given."

"They are promises that shall never be fulfilled!" I replied, seating myself more calmly at the table. "He shall never marry Louise de Blancford, were he as wealthy as an Indian king!"

"How so?" demanded the good pastor. "Think what you say, my son, think what you say. What should stay him, Henri de Cerons?"

"This right hand," I replied, pressing it firmly on

the table; "and now, my good father, in this business I must act without control. Willingly will I ask your advice, willingly will I listen to your counsels, but I must determine upon the results myself; and, remember, in anything that passes between us on this subject, or anything connected therewith, as a friend, as a preceptor, as a monitor, I expect, and shall receive your assistance, whenever it agrees with your own views of right and wrong to give it, and, as a Christian pastor and an honest man, I expect the most profound secrecy in all things. I know that with you I shall have no double-dealing or prevarication—no pious frauds, as I might expect amongst the priests of our enemies and persecutors."

"But what do you propose to do, Henri?" demanded the pastor. "What am I to suppose are your intentions?"

"I know not as yet, good friend," I replied, "and I even now hesitate whether to tell Louise at once what are my changed feelings towards her, and to ascertain what are her feelings towards me, or to leave matters to take their course."

"Nor know I well what to advise, my son," replied La Tour. "It is woful and terrible to think that one so beautiful, so pure, so innocent, should be forced to wed one of a different creed, who in the very first instance will, doubtless, pervert, or try to pervert, her religious principles, and then, perhaps, the purity of her mind; who will ultimately neglect, abandon, perhaps ill-treat her, and who will never, can never, make her happy. It is a sad fate, De Cerons, a sad and terrible fate, especially for one who loves another."

"Can I feel certain that she loves me?" I said, more musing than questioning the good man.

"Enough to make her unhappy with another, am I very sure," replied La Tour, "and that is one reason, Henri, why I am almost inclined to counsel you to *speak* with her on the subject of your mutual affection.

She may feel it deeply that she loves you; but she may not discover how much till she has become the bride of another. I, of course, can never counsel her to disobey the commands of her father, unless I were to see, beyond all doubt and casuistry, that her soul's salvation was endangered by it; but I think there might be a safeguard in knowing her own feelings and yours towards her, which might guide her rightly even where I dare not counsel, and you scarcely dare act—I know not, Henri,—yet I know not."

"I will think of it, my good friend," I replied, "I will think of it often during the night, and I will endeavour, as far as possible, to cast by every selfish consideration; so, fare you well for this evening, for I have duties that call upon me."

CHAPTER XIII.

I PASSED the most anxious and most restless night that I ever yet had known in life; new feelings had got possession of my heart, strong, violent, irresistible; and thoughtful, watchful, unreposing, my mind remained active, with many bitter and painful images, and with many wild and anxious thoughts. My determination, however, was taken ere I rose upon the following morning, nor was it taken without full consideration of the circumstances under which I was to act. Had my cousin's conduct towards me, I asked myself, been such as to lay me under any bond of gratitude or tie of honour, to sacrifice calmly all my own hopes of happiness in life, while at the same time I saw sacrificed the peace, the comfort, the temporal, perhaps the eternal, repose of the being I most loved on all the earth?

The answer was plain and straightforward; there was no such tie: and then again I thought of the Baroness,—not the second wife, but the first,—of her

who had been a mother to me—more than a mother, and I asked myself, how all that I owed to her ought to affect my conduct towards her child? That, too, was soon determined. I felt a consciousness that I could make Louise happy, that I could secure her peace and comfort; and that, if fortune were but added, there could be no danger or difficulty, no pain or anxiety within the common range of probabilities that I could not guard her from, and protect her against.

Was there anything, therefore, in the deep feelings of gratitude and love which I experienced towards the dead, which should forbid my making the attempt so to protect and shield the child of her who had conferred so many benefits upon me? Was it not rather what I owed her, to endeavour, as far as Heaven gave me power, to prevent my poor Louise from being driven into a union with one who could only make her wretched,—the pure tied to the impure, the innocent to the corrupt? The answer was—Yes!

No one can say when he argues with his own heart on a question where all its deepest feelings are interested,—no one can say that simple, straightforward reason alone dictates the reply; nor can I say that it was so in the present instance. But still I had done my best to make it so. I believed that I was right; I believed that there could scarcely be any further question of what my conduct ought to be, and I determined, therefore, to tell Louise of how I loved her,—to inform her of my hopes and wishes for the future, not indeed to bind her by any promises, but to open her eyes, and to satisfy myself as to the feelings of her own heart, and then to leave her native strength of mind, her resolution and her love, to do the rest.

With this determination I rose at daybreak on the following morning. It was a clear, bright, cheerful day, and on my going my early rounds, I found the soldier charged to bear the flag of truce, and letter from *the Prince* of Condé to the Duke of Anjou, waiting for

my further orders. I instantly sat down and wrote the epistle, which I had promised to the Baron de Blancford, explaining, in few and brief words, what had happened in regard to Louise, expressing my grief that she had been subjected to some inconvenience and fatigue, but offering no excuse or apology whatever for an event which I did not think required any.

Having done this, and despatched the messenger, I next made some inquiries concerning the state of the army, as I perceived that a large body of troops were moving to the left from the spot which had been assigned to us for our quarters, leaving only five or six hundred men in the hamlet. I now found that the troops I saw marching were destined to take up their quarters near Loudun, in order to strengthen the centre of the position, as a violent fever had broken out amongst the troops from Provence, which had occasioned a mortality of nearly two thousand men within a few days.

Our little hamlet was now comparatively deserted, a number of the officers had gone to Niort, with the Prince de Condé, and, though Montgomery remained in the command, he was the only man of any consequence left.

After occupying myself with various military avocations, I returned, and found the rest of my little household up, and waiting for me. Good old La Tour looked at me with grave and thoughtful eyes ; but Louise had risen refreshed, and beautiful as the morning; and, had there been any doubt or irresolution remaining in my mind, I do not believe that it could have resisted those bright looks. There was no irresolution, however, and immediately after our morning meal was over, I said,—

"Come, Louise, the day is most beautiful; good Marguelette, here, will doubtless find you some better head-gear than that you travelled with through that terrible cold night, and I will take you round the

camp, to let you see more of the military world than perhaps you have ever seen yet."

Marguelette assured me that almost all the young lady's wardrobe was within reach; for that the Baron had gone off so hastily he had taken little enough for the journey with him. Louise, therefore, was soon equipped for her ramble; and, leaning fondly on my arm, she went forth walking with me from post to post for about half an hour.

Not knowing what was in my heart, she might well wonder at the fits of silent thoughtfulness into which I fell, and, beginning to think that all went not with me as I could wish, she asked, in the sweetest and tenderest tones of her sweet and tender voice, what made me so sad, and why I did not tell "my own Louise." I replied that I would tell her presently, and walking forth out of the hamlet, I led her past the old *manoir*, where the Prince de Condé had made his abode for a time, up the slope of the hill, to a little wood of tall fir-trees, whose evergreen tops spread out till they met each other, although the bolls below, which were far apart, suffered the clear rays of the low wintry sun to stream in over the red and yellow leaves which had fallen from the branches above, and thickly strewed the ground. The day, indeed, was as bright as summer, and it was cheerful and refreshing, too; but there was something which told that it was not summer, something in the aspect of the whole scene which gave a shade of thoughtfulness, if I may so call it, even to the brightness of the morning. The blades of grass upon the sides of the hill were all shining as if they had been hung with gems; but, as with the blaze of light upon many another gem, one saw and felt that the sunshine fell upon nothing but frost-work, and that everything was cold and frozen underneath. There was now no fog upon the ground, and through the clear calm air the church of Loudun and various *other* buildings in that small town were seen rising up

in the distance, and we paused, and gazed over the scene around, without one sound breaking the wintry silence of nature.

"How far is it to that town?" demanded Louise, after gazing for some time.

"Nearly five miles, dear one," I replied.

"How near it looks!" she said: "I shouldn't have thought that it were two."

"It looks so, dear Louise," I replied, "from the clearness of the wintry air; and so it is, Louise," I said, "with future, as with distant things. To the calm, cold icy eye of experience and reason the remote and distant times, the five or six years hence look as near as if we could touch them; the space between dwindles down to nothing, and the rest of life seems but as a moment: while, in the warm and sunny days of youth, the airy mist of passion, of fancy, and of expectation, throws every future thing far, far away, and the five or six years that may lie between us and happiness seem a long age of wearisome expectation."

She looked up in my face and smiled, saying, "I suppose it is so, Henri. I know that since you have gone away from Blancford, in thinking when I might probably see you again, the space has seemed interminable."

"And now that we have met again, Louise," I said, "we are to part in a few short hours—to part, when to meet again?"

She gazed down upon the ground, and sighed deeply, and I added, "You know, Louise, the messenger has gone to the Duke of Anjou's camp, to demand a safe-conduct for you and the rest to join your father?"

"So Marguelette told me," she replied. "Oh, I hope he will not return immediately."

"It will seem as but a moment to us, dear Louise," I replied, "but as a short moment, and then you will leave me, and it may be years before we meet again, and perhaps by that time, Louise,"—my voice trem-

bled, I believe, very much, as I spoke, "and perhaps by that time you may be the bride of another."

Louise started and dropped her hold of my arm, and gazed up in my face with eager and intense looks, as if she had been wakened from some sweet dream by the horrible images that suddenly came across it.

"Oh, no!" she cried, somewhat reproachfully. "No, Henri,—no—no." Her voice dropped as she slowly pronounced the words, and she fell into a fit of musing.

"Louise," I said, after having given her some time for thought, "do you know how I love you?"

"Oh yes, Henri," she replied, looking up still very pale, "I know you love me."

"But do you know how well I love you, Louise?" I demanded. "Do you know that I love you doubly, that I have loved you twice?"

"Twice!" she said, musing. "That is strange, Henri. I think I know what you mean, too—and yet it is strange."

"Scarcely strange, dearest," I answered, "scarcely strange. You know I loved you well before I quitted Blancford, dearly, most dearly, Louise. But I love you differently now, better, more dearly, more warmly, more tenderly."

I heard her breath come very thick as I spoke, and she leaned her hand upon my arm, still looking down, and saying, as if for the first time scanning her own feeling, "Differently—oh yes—and I love you differently, too."

I threw my arm around her, and pressed her to my bosom, saying, "Thank you, thank you, dearest Louise, for that word. Yet tell me, oh! tell me, what it is you feel towards me."

"I cannot," she said, pressing her glowing forehead against my breast; "I cannot tell you, Henri, I scarcely know myself. I feel strangely, very strangely; but it seems as if to part with you again were the most terrible *thing that* could befal me."

Again I pressed her gently to my heart.

"Sit down here, Louise," I said, "on these dry fragments of the fir trees, and let us speak more calmly. Look here, dear girl! This sword that you see, is the sole inheritance of him who loves you better than life. Already, however, that sword has raised him to some renown, and won him some wealth: on it he trusts for more, he trusts to win with it higher rank and station, fortune sufficient for a moderate ambition, and a right to demand the hand of her he loves. That, that, Louise, is the end and object of all my endeavours; that is the hope that animates me and will carry me on to greatness if I am permitted to indulge it; it is that hope which has made me what I now am; it is that hope which will make my efforts far greater: it is for your love, Louise, that I strive; it is that you may be mine entirely, heart of my heart, and soul of my soul, that my arms may be your resting-place for life, and that no one may ever, ever tear you from my bosom. Oh, tell me, dear Louise; give me that one bright consolation, that one surpassing motive for every kind of exertion; tell me, tell me, does the change which you admit has taken place in your feelings towards me, does it tend to the same as my own wishes? does it make you feel that you could be happy as mine—not as a sister, but as a bride—not as a mere companion, but as the one united to me for life, and through life, by every link of love in one, being the sister, the companion, the friend, the wife? Oh, tell me, Louise, tell me. Is it so? Does the change in your feelings towards me speak to your own heart, and say that you can love me with such love, ardent, deep, intense, passionate as my own?"

Louise did not answer, she could not answer for some time, for the tears were rolling over her cheeks, the tears of strong emotion; but her hand was clasped in mine; her head leaned upon my shoulder, the cheek burned, the eyes were bent down, and the lip quivered. There was not a sign of all the many which

her demeanour gave that could teach me anything but hope; and yet I was impatient to hear more. I repeated my question in a different form; I kissed her cheek; again and again I urged her to speak. It was long ere she did so, however; till at length, looking up at me, she said, almost reproachfully, "O Henri, Henri, you know, you feel, you are aware, well aware, that I love you as deeply, truly, fully, as woman can love any man; that had I my will, I would never part with you, I would never leave you. What can I say more?"

"Nothing, dearest, nothing," I replied, "you have said enough; you have made me happy, most happy; happier than I almost ever fancied I should be. And yet much remains, dear Louise, before we can be fully happy together. I have to use every energy and every exertion, to place myself in such a situation that I may rightly and wisely ask your hand. You, Louise, may have fully as much to do on your part. Ere you can be mine, they will press you to give your hand to others, —they will command you, they will urge you—"

"Never, never!" cried Louise, eagerly; "I will never hear them, I will never listen to them for a moment; from this instant, Henri, I am yours, and I promise—"

"Nay, nay, dear Louise," I said, "let me not bind you by any promise; that I have, as yet, no right to do."

"You bind me by no promise, Henri," she said, "but I bind myself. I will never listen to such a thing even for a moment: so let not that trouble your repose at any time. Believe nothing that you hear of the kind; doubt not, fear not, dear Henri. I am yours, and none but yours; when first you began to speak just now, and said you might perhaps find me the bride of another, though I had not thought of all this as I now have, yet I felt that it could never be so, and that never, never would you find me the wife of any one."

We spoke longer upon the same theme, we dwelt upon our thoughts and feelings; agitation and emo-

tion and timidity in some degree passed away from Louise's mind, and gradually she let me see more and more deeply into the recesses of her heart, and made me at each instant happier by showing that I was beloved as fully and deeply as I could wish. We lingered for a considerable time under those fir-trees, and again we walked down the hill to the hamlet, but turned before we reached the camp, and walked some way further round, and lingered still and turned again, and more than once hesitated, and paused, and spoke a few fond words more before we went back to that world between which and ourselves there was now drawn a thin and filmy screen perceptible to none but ourselves, but yet sufficient to be a perfect separation. It seemed as if love was now at home in our mutual bosoms, and the casements of the heart were closed.

Good La Tour was for the time our only confidant, if I may so call it; for in the evening he questioned me closely as soon as he found an opportunity, and I told him at once that I had spoken with Louise upon the subject of my love, and with joy unutterable I had found it was returned. I further added, that I had bound her by no promise, that she was free from all but such engagements as her own heart imposed upon her, but that now to obtain her was the end and object of my existence, and that to him I trusted at least to throw some impediment in the way of a union where misery was the only fortune that she could expect.

He said, in reply, that he could scarcely blame me for what I had done; he could scarcely approve either, he said; for there were so many contending considerations, that he saw not which was the most fit plan to be adopted. In short, it was evident to me, that the good man's sense of what was right towards Louise and towards myself, were struggling against ideas preconceived, of what was right to the Baron as a father. He saw to what the Baron's own conduct had led; to what consequences fatal to his own peace, and to the happiness

of his family; and he evidently doubted the father's power and inclination to conduct his child to happiness and to peace; but still he dared not deny his right to direct her.

The conversation was luckily soon terminated by the entrance of other persons; and the two days that followed passed without any material discussion between La Tour and myself, of the subject that was uppermost in both our thoughts. With Louise those days passed in joy, mingled with that kind of gentle sadness, which the knowledge that our hours of happiness were destined to be few, was well calculated to produce. Each of us felt drawn more and more closely towards each other, as the moments grew few that we were to be together; the knowledge that we must soon part but increased the desire to remain; and gave at once delight and anxiety to our short communion.

At length, however, the messenger arrived with the safe-conduct; there was no further time to be gained; the period of Louise's departure for the camp of the Duke of Anjou, was fixed for the following morning early; and but a few hours remained, ere we were to be parted for an indefinite length of time. It wanted but such a state and such a prospect to bring forth all Louise's deep and fervid feelings. Her affection, her love, were no longer concealed; were no longer veiled under any show of reserve. She wept at the thought of parting from me long and sadly; she felt it more difficult to bear than she had anticipated; and the only thing that seemed to comfort her, was a promise, that, by writing sometimes to her, and frequently to La Tour, I would give her continual tidings of my proceedings, and of my well-being. We passed a long evening, which, as our days of pleasure had been mingled with pain, now gave us hours of pain, not unmingled with pleasure.

At length the time came for her departure, and I mounted with a small body of my men, to escort her till we were met by the party appointed to receive her.

La Tour, Marguelette, and the rest of the old servants, with the baggage, and all the other things they had brought, followed in our train, and we rode slowly on; calmer, indeed, than we were the night before, but still sad. We talked, however, of the joy we had in meeting; of the happy days we had spent together; and we spoke of hopes and pleasures for future years, even while fears mingled with the hopes; and dark images of pain crossed the bright visions that we were inclined to indulge.

Thus we rode on, making the way which, if our wishes could have had effect, would have been interminable, far shorter than it might otherwise have seemed; and, at length, before I thought that we could have gone above a quarter of the way, we saw upon the opposite slope of a valley that we were crossing, a considerable body of horsemen, bearing, like ourselves, a white flag in the midst of them. They halted as soon as they saw us, and halting my men likewise, I rode forward alone, to make sure that we were right. The moment that this was perceived, two gentlemen came forth from the other party; the one a man pretty well advanced in years, and the other apparently a youth, whom, as he rode down the hill, I naturally enough concluded to be Alfred de Blancford, Louise's brother. I soon perceived that I was mistaken, however; it was a young man whom I had seen once before, but where, I could not recollect. The elder of the horsemen I had never till then beheld; but from his dress and demeanour, he was evidently a person of high distinction; and when we met at the bottom of the valley, he saluted me with much courtesy; inquiring if I were the Seigneur de Cerons, and had escorted thither Mademoiselle de Blancford. I replied that such was the case, and begged to know if he was empowered to receive her from my hands; inquiring, at the same time, to whom I had the honour of speaking.

"My name," he said, "is Montpensier; and in the absence of the Duke of Anjou, I am commander-in-chief of the army, with which the Baron de Blancford sojourns

at this moment. I took upon myself the task of meeting Mademoiselle de Blancford for various reasons, but for one especially. This young gentleman is my son, Monsieur de Cerons. You have, I think, seen him before."

"I remember him perfectly, monseigneur," I replied; "but where I had the honour of seeing his face last, I cannot recollect."

"Under your horse's feet, I rather suspect, Monsieur de Cerons," replied the young gentleman, with a graceful inclination of the head. "My visor flew up, as that vile brute I was riding stumbled and fell with me."

"Oh! I remember you well," I replied at once. "You are the young gentleman who made so gallant a charge against us when we were pursuing, the other day. I rather imagine you would have given me some trouble," I continued, smiling, "if your horse had not fallen with you."

The young man coloured with pleasure, and the Duke replied for him. "You speak too flatteringly, Monsieur de Cerons; but he is a brave boy, too; and he told me, the moment he came back, what had occurred, and how generously you had behaved to him, for which we both offer you our best thanks."

"God forbid, sir," I said, "that I should strike one blow at a gallant young gentleman when he is down."

"But," said the Duke, "you might have made him prisoner, and his ransom would have been no slight sum. We cannot, therefore, thus rest your debtors, Monsieur de Cerons, and I brought him here this day, that we might both acquit ourselves to you of that which we owe you."

"You are both more than acquitted already, my lord," I replied. "The thanks which you have been pleased to give me are sufficient recompense; and, let it be remembered always, that this young gentleman neither surrendered nor demanded quarter, that what was done was my own free doing; and, perhaps, the time may *come*, on some future day, when the little kindness I

showed may be returned by some other. Will you allow me," I added, to change the subject, "to inquire whether any of the relations of Mademoiselle de Blancford are with your company above?"

"No," replied the Duke. "The truth is, Monsieur de Cerons, that the Baron de Blancford has been somewhat enraged by a letter from the Prince de Condé to the Duke of Anjou respecting him, and by one which, I understand, you wrote to him yourself. I, therefore, undertook the task of meeting you here, to prevent any unpleasant collision. I wished his two sons to have accompanied me, but he replied, that, if he did not go himself, none of his family should go. But I have full authority to receive the young lady, you may believe me."

"I doubt it not in the least, my lord," I replied, "but I was in hopes that the two boys were there, who have been brought up beside me from their infancy, but whom I have not seen for many months. However, Mademoiselle de Blancford shall be delivered into your hands immediately, and I pray you to do your best to induce her father to look differently upon my letter, and to believe that, when I gave you the little *alerte* the other night, my only view was to rescue him, if, as I suspected, he was detained a prisoner."

"What, then, it was you," said the Duke, "who roused us in such a manner, and who carried off one of the cornets. Take care how you come in the way of Martigue, Monsieur de Cerons, for he has not forgotten the loss of that cornet."

"I will treat it with all honour and distinction, my lord," I replied, smiling: "I will carry it with me into the very next field where I am likely to meet your army, and there Monsieur de Martigue may retake it, if he have the will and the power."

"I will tell him so, I will tell him so," replied the Duke. "We shall have the days of chivalry revived again. But we must waste no more daylight, Monsieur

de Cerons, for we shall but have light enough to get back to the camp."

At this hint I immediately went back; and, telling Louise who it was that had come to meet her, I dismounted from my horse, and led her forward by the bridle rein. Good old La Tour and the rest followed at a little distance, giving us an opportunity of passing those few last moments alone. We said nothing, however, as we advanced. Her hand rested, for a moment, in mine; our eyes looked long and speakingly into each other's; and thus we went on, till we approached the Duke of Montpensier, who, dismounting also, took a step forward to meet his fair charge. He asked her some courteous question, of no great import, as he approached, but Louise could not answer; her voice was choked, her eyes were full of tears. The Duke looked to me, as if for an explanation. I had none to give, and felt that the best way was to withdraw as soon as possible.

"Louise," I said, approaching as close as I could, and speaking in a low voice, "Louise, my beloved, adieu! God be with you, and protect you, and give you courage, and give you strength."

Louise bent down over her jennet, let her arm drop over mine, and her weeping eyes fell upon my shoulder. After a moment, she made an effort, and raised her head, saying, "Adieu, Henri, adieu!"

As she did so, our lips met, and, turning hastily away, I quitted a scene that was becoming too much for me, in every respect. Ere I had taken ten steps, however, some one touched me on the arm. It was the young Prince de la Roche, the Duke of Montpensier's son, who held out his hand to me, and grasped mine, saying, "We shall meet again, Monsieur de Cerons, we shall meet again."

CHAPTER XIV.

It may well be conceived that the first few miles of my return were passed by me without any particular observation of the objects around. Moric Endem was not with me, to call my attention to this thing or that, and to inspire me with the same remarking and commenting spirit as himself; and busy with the thoughts and feelings of my own bosom, I saw, perhaps, the things that I passed with the mere corporeal eye, but, if I did so, the communication between the organ of sight and the reasoning brain was altogether cut off for the time.

Thus for about five miles I rode on, when the distant sound of a trumpet caught my ear, and caused me to make an effort to shake off selfish sorrow, and turn to the business of life again. The spot at which I had then arrived was so enclosed with trees—though close to the edge of a high hill, commanding a view over a wide plain below—that I could not see any object at a distance, and riding quickly on to the point where the road left the wood, and opened upon the bare slope, I gazed down into the plain.

My surprise was not small at seeing a very considerable body of men, perhaps three or four thousand, winding along at the distance of fully four miles. They were marching on a line rather to the left of that which the Protestant camp occupied, and seemed to me to be bending their way rapidly towards the Charente. They were easily to be distinguished from the Protestants, whose white cassocks always afforded a distinguishing mark at a great distance, and I should instantly have endeavoured to cut off some stragglers from their rear, in order to ascertain what was their object and destination, had I not been shackled by a flag of truce, and felt myself bound to return to our camp before I made any attack upon the enemy.

I rode on, therefore, as fast as possible, trusting that, as night was not far distant, the party I had seen would lodge itself in some of the neighbouring villages. As soon as I had arrived at my own quarters, I made some inquiries in regard to any changes that had taken place, and found indications of the army moving by detachments towards the Loire. Montgomery I could not find, though I sent messengers seeking for him in different directions, and I, consequently, made up my mind to let my men take some repose, to mount them upon fresh horses, of which my little band had now plenty, and if there was a possibility of seeing after nightfal, to beat up the enemy's quarters, and endeavour to gain some information.

Giving order to this effect, I sat down to my solitary supper, and had very nearly concluded the meal, when Montgomery himself entered, saying, "I have come to sup with you, De Cerons. They tell me you have been sending all over the place for me; so I suppose you have some news."

I gave him the best cheer I could, and while we sat together, told him what I had seen, and what I proposed to do.

"They are on foot again, are they?" he said, after thinking over the whole for a few minutes. "They must have got information that De Pile is moving up from Guyenne, with our reinforcements, and wish to cut him off. Yet, what can be done? The orders we have received to-night are distinct, to march upon the Loire, and if we do not do so, and do so quickly, we shall never be able to effect our junction with the Germans, and the Duke of Deux Ponts, or Zweibrucken, as his own people call him, and that were worse than missing De Pile. However, the only thing that can be done, is what you propose yourself, to gain any intelligence that we can, to show these gentlemen that they are discovered, and to send instant information to the Prince and the Admiral. But to make your reconnoissance anything

at all effectual, you must have more men, De Cerons. What will you have?"

Of course I was glad to have as large a force as could easily be managed in the darkness of the night; and as the arquebusiers had proved of great use to me on my former expedition, I required their presence, together with some ten more spears, which Montgomery readily granted. From him I gained a more thorough knowledge, too, than I had hitherto acquired, of all the existing places and circumstances of the Protestant leaders. Their forces had been so greatly weakened by the sickness which prevailed in Loudun, that reinforcements were absolutely necessary to enable them to keep the field against the Catholics. Pile had been sent some time before to gather together all the troops that he could in Gascony, and a large body of reiters, under the Duke of Deux Ponts, was marching rapidly towards the Loire, in order to join the Protestant army.

In the meantime, the Catholics had been reinforced by large bodies of troops from every part of France, and were eager to fight the Protestants before either Pile or the Duke could come up. The task, therefore, of the Protestant leaders was a difficult one; namely, to avoid a battle in the presence of a superior army, to guard the line of the Charente, where all the bridges were in their own hands, and to aid the junction of the Gascon forces from the south, at the same time that they extended their line of operations in order to facilitate the junction of the Germans.

"I trust," said Montgomery, "that the Prince will decide upon maintaining the Charente, in preference to anything else. Pile is not one to suffer himself easily to be outwitted, and Stuart, who is with him, will cut his way through a wall of solid iron, if need be. Once having joined the Gascons, we shall be able to detach troops to the Loire, without losing our command of the rivers; and when the Germans have once joined, we can fight the enemy with the advantage of a just cause, and *no great disadvantage* in point of numbers."

"Depend upon it," I said, after hearing this explanation, "since such is our situation, and that of the enemy, the Catholics I have seen are thrown forward to gain possession of some place in the heart of our position. But I will soon bring you farther intelligence if possible; and in the mean time were it not better to send off at once a messenger to the Prince and the Admiral to tell them what has been already observed, and the direction which the Catholics are taking?"

Montgomery agreed immediately to do so; and in less than an hour after, I was once more in the saddle, and advancing, with a force sufficient for all that I proposed, towards the village in which I calculated the enemy would lodge that night. I need not enter into all the particulars of my expedition: suffice it to say, that about one o'clock in the morning, I found forty or fifty poor peasants in a barn, who had been driven out of their village by the enemy, on account of adhering to the Protestant faith, and who thought themselves not a little fortunate in having escaped with only a few strokes from the staff of a lance to make them give up their dwellings the more quickly to the royal troops. I learned little from them, however, except that the commander of the Catholics lodged in one of the houses at the end of the village; and thinking that it would be an excellent consummation if I could carry him off, I bent my way thither, guided by one of the young labourers.

Before we came near, I caused my men either to strip off their white cassocks, or, when they were lined with any other colour, to turn them inside out, in order, as far as possible, to escape attention. I did not succeed, however, so well this time as I had done before; there were men on watch at both sides of the house, and though we approached somewhat near without being seen, we were at length challenged in a loud voice. The sentry would not let the false word I gave pass current, but instantly fired his arquebuse. This did not scare us; but, as had been arranged before, while the arquebusiers

remained drawn up in line to support us, I dismounted with my men at arms, and rushed forward to attack the house. Moric Endem shot the unfortunate sentry through the head with a pistol, the door and one of the windows were burst open in a moment, and we poured into the lower rooms, in which we found ten or twelve men who had been sleeping on their arms, on the floor.

Taken by surprise, and in confusion, their resistance was not very great, but it was sufficient to give time for the commander himself to make his escape out of one of the back windows in his shirt. We did not, however, discover this till afterwards, for I was mistakenly led to imagine, for more than an hour, that he had fallen into our hands.

I had just cut down one fellow who opposed my progress up the stairs, and had nearly reached the top, when, out of a room on the right hand rushed a gay-looking youth in a furred dressing-gown embroidered with gold. He bore a taper in one hand and a sword in the other, but a pistol at his head with an order to surrender, rescue or no rescue, soon brought his weapon into my hand; and passing him down the stairs to those who came behind, I entered the different rooms above, and, with Moric Endem and two or three others, swept the table that I found there of a number of papers and parchments, with cases for writing, and other things which I doubted not would give us full information respecting the object of the enemy's movement.

As I was looking at the title of one of these papers, a sharp fire, opened by the arquebusiers which I had left without, announced that the enemy were prepared to make us pay for our intrusion, and, clearing the house as fast as possible, I effected my retreat, though I found the garden half full of Catholic troopers on foot. It was now, however, that the stratagem of making my men quit or turn their cassocks, procured us great advantages, which I had not foreseen. In issuing forth from the house in some disarray, the enemy could not tell

whether each man was of their own party or not, and in the confusion that followed, we being very certain of what we were to do, and they quite uncertain, we forced our way through, and regained our horses, carrying with us the gentlemen in the furred dressing-gown, and three other prisoners.

Of the men who accompanied me, two only were missing; one of my own band whom I had seen fall by a pistol shot in the head, and one of the men at arms that Montgomery had given me, who, not so well accustomed to such expeditions as we were, lingered behind and was taken prisoner.

We now made the best of our way over the hill, the enemy mounting as fast as horses could be brought out, and pursuing us; but I had ridden over the ground several times before, and knew every inch of it, so that they gained little but their labour, till at length I reached the spot from which I had first seen them on the preceding morning. There, perceiving by a strong glare, the cause of which I did not at the moment discover, that I was followed by some thirty or forty horse, I ordered my men at arms to wheel about and give them a taste of our spear points. As there was no one to support them, they did not make any great resistance, but were driven down the hill in a very short space of time.

I pursued them no further than the shoulder of the heights, whence I could see the village which we had attacked, and, to my surprise, beheld it all in flames. How it happened I do not know; our people were themselves inclined to believe that the Catholics had set it on fire in their indignation at the peasants having guided us thither; but this opinion was evidently founded upon party animosity, and I myself feel sure that, in the confusion attending our attack upon the farm-house, some light must accidentally have fallen and set fire to the building.

Hurrying on as fast as possible, we reached my quar-

ters about five in the morning, and then, for the first time, I had an opportunity of speaking with, and showing some civility to, my principal prisoner. He was conducted up stairs to my own apartments by two of the soldiers, while I remained for a minute or two below, to see my men properly disposed of; and, on entering my room, I found him standing shivering by the fire. I approached him, saying, "I fear, sir, you have had a very cold ride?"

"I never had so cold or so disagreeable a one in my life," he replied.

"I was sure that such must be the case," I answered. "But we must try to make you more comfortable as soon as possible."

"Pray, sir," he said, gazing at me, somewhat superciliously, from head to foot, and sticking out from under his furred dressing-gown a bare leg and foot only covered with a slipper, "can you procure me such a thing in your camp, as a wooden leg? for I am quite sure that this thing, which used to help me through the world, must be frozen off by this time."

"No," I answered, "I do not know that we can do that; but, at all events, I think we can bring some life into the one that you have; and if you will take my advice, you will get into a warm bed again, as fast as possible, drink as large a portion as you can swallow of hot wine, and keep yourself warm for half an hour or so, by telling me who you are, and what is the object of the expedition whereof you were, I suppose, the commander."

"Sir, you do me a great deal too much honour," said the young gentleman. "However, as you are a very civil person, I will first take possession of the bed you talk of, if you will show me where it is; I will then drink the wine, if anybody will bring it to me; and, having done that, hold myself bound to reply to any questions that you think right to ask, that are not wrong for me to answer."

Calling to Andriot, I caused my prisoner to be placed in the room which had been occupied by good La Tour, and the warm wine to be procured for him, together with some spices and comfits, and having thus made him as comfortable as I could, I questioned him as to his rank, station, &c. To my mortification, I now found that he was not the commander; that the expedition was destined to attack Jarnac, and was led by the celebrated Count de la Rivière Puitaillé. The young gentleman whom I had taken proved to be one of the gay gallants of the Court, called Gersay, and my only consolation for having missed the commander was the prospect of a large ransom for his friend and companion. My men were more satisfied, indeed, than I was; for Moric and the rest had stumbled upon various articles of value, and a considerable sum of money, so that the prize to be divided was considerable. Gersay's ransom was soon arranged, and soon paid, and I once more found my military chest overflowing.

In the mean time, the absence of the Prince at Niort, though absolutely necessary, in order to obtain money and to treat with the Queen of England, was sadly detrimental to our military prospects.

Before full information of all that we had discovered could be conveyed to the Prince de Condé, and before the troops could be recalled from their movements towards the Loire, or others marched to defend Jarnac, La Rivière had made himself master of that place, thus occupying an important point on the Charente, and breathing nothing but vengeance for the attack upon the village, in retaliation for which he made desperate excursions on every side.

The burning of the village, which must have been purely accidental, led to consequences of a very terrible kind. The house occupied by a Captain Lespinette had been the second or third which took fire, and some of his effects had been burnt therein; and on the first expedition which La Rivière entrusted to him he vowed

he would retaliate upon the Protestants. He accordingly attacked a village, swept away all that it contained; and, some women and children having taken refuge in one of the houses, while their husbands and fathers escaped into the fields, he designedly, we were assured, set fire to the place, and burnt them to death therein.

An awful retribution fell upon him. As soon as a sufficient force could be collected, the Admiral commanded the Marquis de Briquemaut to attack La Rivière in Jarnac. The town was taken by assault, but as the inhabitants were our own people no outrages were committed. The Catholics who surrendered received quarter, and many made their escape; but Lespinette and his band took refuge in the old keep, declaring they would hold it out to the last. Almost at the same moment that they were making this declaration, the lower part took fire. Unable to find any other means of escape, the commander and two of his companions determined to leap from the loopholes, which were large. But the corbels which hung over impeded them, and, in the effort to force themselves through their armour was so tightly jammed in the stonework that no human power could remove them, and in this horrible situation they were actually burnt to death in their arms.

At this period the situation of the Protestant army became every day more and more critical. The Catholic force, nearly double in number that which we could oppose to it, was now approaching nearer and nearer, and interposing between us and the troops coming from Gascony, with the purpose of forcing us to an immediate battle. The most important points of the Charente were, it is true, in our hands; the Admiral and the Prince de Condé were once more at the head of their troops; and had their tactical skill been well seconded by the zeal and obedience of the officers under their command, we might have set the enemy at defiance till

sufficient reinforcements had arrived to enable us to fight them.

The Duke of Anjou was advancing daily, but still his progress was delayed far more than might otherwise have been the case by the continual skirmishes to which D'Andelot and the Prince de Condé contrived to treat him on his advance. Scarcely a day passed without some hundreds, sometimes thousands, of our troops being thrown unexpectedly upon some vulnerable point of the enemy's position; sometimes we advanced absolutely into the quarters of the Duke of Montpensier, and once we were actually in the lodgings of the Duke of Anjou himself.

On the latter occasion, under the command of Puyviault, we encountered close to Anville, where the Duke had established his quarters, a body of seventy or eighty gentlemen of the Court, and obstinately maintaining our ground for some time till we were reinforced, large bodies of men began to come up on either side till it became absolutely necessary for the Protestants to withdraw, lest the skirmish should end in a general battle when neither party was prepared.

Nothing, however, could stop the progress of the enemy, and, early in March, the Duke of Anjou made himself master of Châteauneuf on the Charente. The bridge, however, was in our possession, and we had various small posts pushed across the river in different directions, in order to guard against surprise. I myself, no longer acting as a mere partisan, but attending implicitly to the orders I received as a soldier, was stationed some little way in advance of Cognac, with orders to obtain every information that I could regarding the enemy's movements, and communicate them immediately to the Admiral or the Prince de Condé; and at three o'clock on the very day of my arrival, I perceived a large body of the enemy marching down towards me. The continual noise they made, the sounding of trumpets and beating of drums, made me suspect at once that

their appearance was a mere feint; and having ridden to a rising ground which gave me a view over the country beyond, I clearly perceived that they were followed by no sufficient force to attempt the passage of the river at that point, and sent immediate intelligence of what I had observed to the Admiral, in order to make sure that he was not deceived by any stratagem of the enemy. Coligny sent me down thanks in return, telling me that he was not deceived; and that after having maintained my ground as well as I could, I might come round to join the Count de Montgomery, at the village of Triac. The affair at Cognac lasted scarcely half an hour; but it was past midnight before I could bring my men, fatigued with a long march, to the quarters appointed me.

The house seemed pretty comfortable, and the stables for the horses good, with room in a granary above for the greater part of the men, and plenty of room in the house for the rest. Not a truss of straw, however, was to be found; no forage of any kind, and while I was endeavouring to obtain some in the village by sending hither and thither, I saw a head put out from one of the up-stair windows of the house, and heard a voice call me by name. "Monsieur de Cerons, Monsieur de Cerons," said the voice, "I give you good evening; it is long since we met."

The tones were not unfamiliar to my ear; but yet I could not recollect where I had heard them, and I merely replied, "I will come up in a minute, when I have seen the horses fed."

"*Morbleu!*" said Moric Endem, who was with me, "you may think yourself lucky if you get a straw a horse, seigneur. These are the nights, I take it, which teach cavalry horses to be crib-biters, seeing that they can get nothing else to bite."

"Moric," I said, "as we passed the day before yesterday, there was a large farm I saw about a quarter of a mile out there to the right. The man, Chemille told

me, would neither say whether he was Catholic or Protestant. But I must have forage whichever he is. The Admiral says we must not plunder, so take ten men with you, go to his house, and with your sword in one hand and this purse in the other, tell him you come from the Seigneur de Cerons for the forage he wants for his horses. Give him his choice of the gold or the steel, and bring back the forage at all events."

"Bravo! bravo!" cried the voice from the window above, though I certainly did not know I had been listened to; "justice and equity both together, Monsieur de Cerons;" and leaving Moric to fulfil his orders, which he did with pre-eminent success, I entered the house and mounted the creaking staircase, which seemed as if two men at a time would have brought it to the ground.

There were lights and a blazing fire in the room on my right hand, and I accordingly entered, when I saw before me a tall, powerful man sitting in the window-seat with a page busily taking off the various pieces of his armour. He turned round his head, as I approached, though bestowing no very soft benediction on the page for pinching his leg with the *genouillère*, and exclaimed, "Welcome, welcome, De Cerons! so I find you as I hoped to find you, changed from little David the shepherd's boy, into a mighty man of war. And who shall say what will come of it next?"

The face that was turned towards me was that of my first military friend and counsellor, Stuart, and with equal joy and gratitude I grasped his hand and welcomed him to the army.

"I have expected to see you long," I said; "but certainly did not expect to see you this night, and in my own quarters."

"Why it so happens," replied Stuart, "that they are mine, too; for the house and yard and stables were to be shared between us. Heaven knows how we should have managed if I had brought on my band. But I left the greater number of them some way back, for men

and horses were absolutely exhausted by hard riding and starvation. Though the Prince would very willingly have kept me at Jarnac to sup with him to-night, and dine with him to-morrow, yet I came on with two or three of my servants only, to see what was doing out here at the advance guard; for I have a strange notion that we shall not be four-and-twenty hours without a battle. I wanted to see you, too, and have got a good supper ready for you, as there wants no food for men's mouths here, though all the forage I could get was a bushel of oats, and a handful of straw for six horses."

I followed Stuart's example as soon as possible, in disencumbering myself of my armour, for I had never had the casque off my head for more than twenty hours. Nor had anything passed my lips but a cup of cold water during the whole of that time, so that the sight of a huge piece of roasted pork and a dish of pigs' ears and feet stewed with crayfish, was, I must acknowledge, one of the pleasantest prospects that my eyes had lighted upon for some time. For my poor men's sakes, too, I was glad to hear that provisions were to be had in abundance, and, before I ate myself, I took care to send out the means to purchase everything that was necessary, although my expeditions had been so successful as to leave the purses of my troop better stored than those of any other in the army.

During supper, Stuart and I talked over all that had happened to us both since we parted in Bordeaux; and although my first intercourse with him had been but of a few hours' duration, yet, when we met, we felt as if we had been old and intimate friends for many years. He told me all that had befallen him to delay his journey to join the army; the difficulty in getting his Scotch companions over from his native country, or raising others fitted for his band; the necessity which then presented itself of joining his forces to those of De Pile, and of labouring with that commander to induce the Protestant noblemen of Higher and Lower Gascony to come for-

ward in arms, and risk something for the common cause; then the obstacles which the Catholics had thrown in his way to prevent his junction with the Protestant army; and he ended by telling me that he had at length been obliged to leave De Pile behind with the greater part of the troops, and with only sixty helmets to make his way on to join the Prince de Condé, having a sort of presentiment in his mind, which, he said, had never failed him hitherto, that a battle was on the eve of taking place between the two contending parties.

To me he put a thousand questions concerning my state and prospects, although it was evident enough that he had heard news of me, from time to time, and was not a little proud of his military neophyte. I told him all the military part of my history, as I have told it here, and met his approbation in all my proceedings.

In pursuing these subjects, however, the conversation naturally turned to good Martin Vern, his journey to Bordeaux, and the redemption of my dagger, and, as soon as the subject was mentioned, he exclaimed, "Oh! by the way, it is true, I did what was, perhaps, not very justifiable on my part, and made good Solomon Ahar do what was not quite right upon his. But, having seen how much you regretted the loss of your weapon, and, also, having received an unexpected sum, which gave me a few crowns to spare, I went and insisted upon redeeming it, thinking that, in a day or two, I should join you. I have been forced to wander far enough since," he continued; "but your dagger is quite safe, and with my baggage at Jarnac. One thing, however, I must tell you, which happened in the redemption of it, and which made me very glad that I had got it out of the Jew's hands, who has now moved from Bordeaux to Paris, as, I dare say, you have heard."

"No," I replied, "I did not hear of his removal. But I can easily conceive that Bordeaux was not much to his taste. Yet, tell me, what was this circumstance *which* made you glad?"

"Doubtless, you know the fact yourself, already," replied Stuart, "but I discovered it from the Jew. When, much against his will, I had driven him to give it up, good Solomon said, 'Ha! do you know it is hollow, Seigneur Stuart?' And he then showed me, by weighing it against another dagger, having a smaller hilt than it had, that the haft is hollow, and, through a hole where one of the old jewels had fallen out, we clearly saw some folded parchment within. It may be a matter of some consequence, or of none to you, for aught I know. Were you aware of the fact?"

I replied in the negative; and, after some farther conversation on the subject, it was determined that, if military operations did not prevent us, we should ride together to Jarnac on the following morning, where I should redeem my dagger, and ascertain what the hilt contained.

After that we separated, Stuart retiring to his bed, and I to mine, and though, for the last five or six days, I had borne up with scarcely any rest or repose, I now fell into a profound and heavy slumber, still, motionless, dreamless, more like death itself than sleep.

CHAPTER XV.

THE day had not far advanced when some one, shaking me by the arm, roused me from my sleep, and looking up, I found Stuart already up and fully armed.

"Come," he said, "De Cerons, come, you will be called a sluggard. I have just had a message from the Admiral, who is at Bassac, and my people have come on there with the baggage. The same messenger brings a message to you, requiring you to come and report more fully what took place yesterday at Cognac. It would seem that intelligence has been received from that side, which leads to some apprehension."

I shook my head. "They will make no attempt there," I replied. "However, I will be up and out in a moment."

"I will see your horses ready," replied Stuart; and, ere they were well prepared, I was myself down in the courtyard.

Leaving some brief orders for Moric Endem, who did not appear, I rode away with my companion, followed by his attendants and some four or five of my own men. The light was still grey in the dull March morning, but everything was quite quiet and still, and nothing, as we passed along, would have given to any eye the slightest indication of warring armies in the immediate neighbourhood, and the approach of a speedy and sanguinary conflict. We went on, talking of the position and situation of the armies, and Stuart seemed perfectly confident, from what he had heard the night before, that any attempt of the enemy to pass the Charente at Châteauneuf would be frustrated in a moment.

"There is Soubise," he said, "and Montgomery, and La Loue, with plenty of forces to guard the passage, at all events, till the rest of the army could come up; and the enemy dare not attempt it before the force which the Admiral can bring into the field."

Scarcely, however, were the words out of his mouth, when a trooper at full gallop overtook us. It proved to be one of my own people, who came on waving his hand for us to stop, and exclaimed, the moment that he came up, "In God's name, return, seigneur! The enemy have passed the river by the bridge and by a bridge of boats. I have myself seen ten or twelve cornets of horse, with the great blue standard amongst them. The whole vanguard has passed already, I am sure; and there is a bridge of boats built just below the other bridge."

"I fear this is some negligence on La Loue's part," I said, turning to Stuart; "I have always remarked that *he* is the most negligent of commanders. I will go

back, but I fear we shall have to fight, and we are in no condition to do it. For Heaven's sake, Stuart, ride on, and let the Admiral know!"

These were all the words that were spoken, and Stuart, waving his hand, galloped off, while I hurried back, as fast as possible, to the village. Half a dozen messengers, going at full speed towards the quarters of the Admiral and the Prince de Condé, met me before I reached Triac, but passed without speaking, and, just before my quarters, I found Moric Endem with my own troop and the horse arquebusiers, drawn up in order to march. Without a moment's delay we hurried out from the village, and the next moment the whole scene of the commencing battle was beneath our eyes.

The beautiful meadows, which there sweep down to the bank of the river, were now filled with the royal troops in all the splendid array of war. Cornets, and standards, and waving plumes, and gay-coloured cassocks lined the whole side of the river, while over the bridge of Châteauneuf, and over a bridge of boats, constructed during the night, the rear-guard of the Catholic army was passing, with cymbal and trumpet and drum, the clang of which, borne by the wind, reached the hill where I stood.

Some half a mile before the great body of the Catholics were a number of squadrons of horse, charging with levelled lances, two or three small bands of Huguenots, who, though contending with them gallantly, were evidently contending in vain. We could see the lances shivered, and the horses go over, but still the Protestant cavalry were driven back towards a large pond confined within some raised causeways, and a rivulet which meandered in silver brightness through the meadows at the foot of the hill. Other small bodies of Protestant horse were seen coming up at full speed to the aid of their companions; but more effectual assistance appeared at that moment, for, drawing out from between the walls of a little hamlet, I perceived four of

five companies of infantry, which I immediately knew to be the gallant and determined body of Pluviaut's arquebusiers, who advanced rapidly towards the causeway of the tank, and opened a sharp fire upon the nearest squadrons of the Catholic cavalry.

This was all seen as we rode on down the hill; but the moment after, the sound of a trumpet on the right called my attention in that direction, and I saw a small party of our own horse, perhaps consisting of a hundred and fifty, or two hundred men, galloping down in the same direction as myself. Recognising at their head one whose skill and talents were already remarkable, and who is now celebrated as La Noue, together with Acier and La Loue, whose vigour and determination, in all moments of actual conflict, seldom failed to inspire their soldiers to the greatest efforts, I made what speed I could to join them, and was hailed gladly, though there was no pausing to speak, or to draw a rein.

On we galloped four a breast down the road till we had passed some hedges that intersected the slope of the hill; and then, spreading out, charged the enemy's cavalry, just as they were passing the causeway on the right of the tank. Pluviaut, at the same moment, renewed his fire upon the enemy, and we drove them back in great confusion, for two or three hundred yards.

As all that we could hope to do, however, was to delay the enemy in the meadows by the river, so long as to enable the Admiral and the Prince de Condé to gain a good position on the heights, La Noue gave the order to wheel and keep upon the same line with the infantry; but on looking round we saw that Pluviaut, attacked on the left hand, had been forced to retreat, and that Martigue, with his fire-eating cavalry, had passed round on the other side of the tank, and was already on our flank.

We had no time for preparation, the Catholics were upon us with a rapidity and an energy worthy of admiration; Martigue was within ten paces of me when I

turned my horse; and, calling out, "Ha, the cornet! the cornet!—*à moi, à moi*, Monsieur de Cerons!" he spurred on upon me. I met him as best I might, but our little band was broken by their impetuous charge in every direction; La Noue and the rest were making the best of their way back towards the infantry of Pluviaut; and their men were following by twos and threes as they could disentangle themselves. After two or three sharp blows, I found that I must either get away from Martigue or suffer myself to be taken, and, therefore, drawing a pistol from the holster, I shot his horse in the throat, and the animal went down at once.

"That is not fair!" he cried, as the horse fell with him.

"I had no other resource," shouted I, as I galloped on. "You see I am left alone."

Thus saying, I made my way back to the rest as fast as I could, and found our little cavalry once more rallied and supporting Pluviaut, who with admirable skill and determination was keeping the enemy at bay as long as possible, maintaining every little hedge and every little wall with his arquebusiers, taking advantage of each rise and fall of the ground, and fighting every step as he slowly retreated towards the village where I had slept during the preceding night. To him, I cannot help saying, more than to any one else, is to be attributed that the battle did not prove more disastrous to the Protestants than it ultimately did.

In the mean time La Noue exclaimed to me, "Retreat into the village, De Cerons, as fast as possible, and maintain yourself in it as long as you can, for there is Martigue dashing up towards it on the right, and will cut us off if he is not prevented."

Taking the shorter road, I was there before the Catholic leader, and received him at the entrance of the principal road, or street, if I may so call it, with a charge, which though it could not be long sustained, drove him back for some way, and enabled La Noue and the rest to retire in good order.

Acier came to my assistance in a moment or two after, exclaiming, in a gay tone, "Now, Fortune's favourite, let us see how long you and I, De Cerons, can keep out the enemy!"

"Not long, Acier, I fear," replied I; "both your numbers and mine are somewhat thinned since the beginning of this morning; and see, there are six more cornets coming up the hill to join Martigue. Ha, Moric!" I continued, as I turned round to look at the numbers of my men, "I thought you were gone, my poor fellow. Are there any more coming up?"

"Two will be here in a minute, seigneur," replied Moric; "I sent them to see the varlets and horse-boys and baggage out at the other end of the town. Ah, Master Martigue," he exclaimed, seeing that the enemy had paused for a single instant, and ridden round a little to the right, "I've stopped that gap for you. There's a road between two houses there," he continued, "but I have upset a waggon across it."

Good Moric's precaution, however, did not avail us for long. Martigue himself again charged us in front; and, though the narrowness of the road enabled us to stand against him firmly, yet we saw that a party of his men were busy in removing the waggon which had been overturned; and after protracting the resistance as long as possible, we effected our retreat only just as the enemy were pouring in upon our flank.

Pluviaut, however, was by this time safe; and as we issued forth from the other side of the village, with our men mingled with the foremost of the enemy, the glad sight appeared of D'Andelot coming up at the head of a considerable body of horse, while a long hedge of spears was seen rising over the slope, and giving notice that the Admiral or the Prince de Condé would be in the field in a few minutes.

The enemy perceived this at the same moment that we did, and pursued no farther; Martigue hastening to *streng*then himself in the village, in order to maintain it,

if possible, till the royal troops came up. D'Andelot halted his men, for a moment, in order not to charge friends and enemies together, and welcomed us, as we rode up, with nothing but courage and confidence in his tone, exclaiming, "Ah, brave Acier! ah, De Cerons! Gallantly done, gentlemen, gallantly done! Rally your men, and let us at them again! Now each man do as he sees me do!" And, as soon as we were in line, he spurred on again upon the village.

Martigue, confident in his numbers and his courage, had, by this time, drawn out a part of his cavalry beyond the houses, and we spurred forward upon them with determination equal to their own. I was at the distance of about twenty paces from D'Andelot, who had no lance; but I saw him gallop straight on to a gay-looking cavalier, opposite to him, armed from head to foot, and putting past his spear, he struck him under the visor with the gauntlet of his left hand, which, at the same time, held his reins. With that single blow he dashed up the covering of his enemy's face, while, at the very same moment, with his right he pointed a pistol under the helmet, and fired. The man fell dead from his horse, and D'Andelot passed on at once through the line.*

Though we certainly did not follow D'Andelot's order, in doing as he did, yet we did our best. Martigue's troops were driven again into the village, the streets of which became a terrible slaughter-house. In a few minutes, the Admiral himself, with a large body of cavalry, came up to support us, and the Catholics were forced out at the other side, and over the hill, for nearly half a mile.

Their operations had all been well-arranged, however. By the time we had proceeded thus far, we were suddenly

* This curious trait of the famous D'Andelot is recorded by all the other persons present, as well as by Monsieur de Cerons. The person who was thus killed is said to have been the Marquis de Monsalez, but there is every reason to think that this is a mistake. I beg it to be remembered that all the facts here stated by M. de Cerons, are borne out by all the contemporary authorities.

assailed by a tremendous discharge of fire-arms, and Martigue, finding himself supported by the Count de Brissac, with a fresh body of cavalry and sixteen hundred arquebusiers, horse and foot, resumed the offensive, while we were driven back in considerable confusion, from the incessant and well-directed fire kept up upon us, by what were called "The old bands of Brissac."

The position that we had attained, however, though we had gained it but for a moment, showed us the whole royalist army on this side the river, the Duke of Montpensier advancing up the slope, with at least ten thousand men, and the division of the Duke of Anjou following, in fine order, towards the tank which I have before mentioned.

After retreating for about three or four hundred yards, the troops got into somewhat better array, and the Admiral took care to seize the opportunity of restoring confidence by wheeling with a small force as if to charge Martigue. He did not do so, however; but, after looking round him for a moment, as if seeking some one he could trust, but whose absence would be no great detriment, he beckoned me up to him, and said, in a low tone, "Monsieur de Cerons, you fear nothing, I think?"

"I trust not, sir," I replied.

"The battle must be general, I think," he said; "there is no avoiding it. I wish some one to ride towards Jarnac, to the Prince de Condé, without the loss of a moment, to tell him to bring up the main body of the troops, and charge, in order to extricate his vanguard. We will maintain the ground till he comes. The straight road runs along the whole line of those arquebusiers;—whoever undertakes the task must endure their fire.—Will you go? Take three men with you if you do."

I merely bowed my head in reply, spoke a word or two to Moric Endem, leaving him in the command of my surviving men, and, accompanied by Andriot and two

troopers, galloped off as hard as I could go towards Jarnac. Either the arquebusiers for some time did not see me, or mistook me for one of their own people, as I came galloping rapidly towards them, for they suffered me to pass half along the line without firing a shot at me. There, however, they seemed to discover their mistake; and, at the distance of not more than a hundred yards, opened upon me one of the most tremendous fires that I ever remember to have seen. Poor Andriot was down in a moment, but there was no possibility of stopping, and on I went at the full gallop.

About thirty or forty yards farther, a ball struck my cuirass, but glanced off without entering, and a second passed through the crest of my casque. Two or three went through the cassock I wore above my arms, and one ball just grazed the lower part of my bridle hand, sufficiently to deluge my glove in blood. It then struck the pommel of the saddle, and bounded off. I was now within twenty yards of the end of the line, but ere I reached it, another of my men was knocked off his horse; and if the arquebusiers had been wise enough to fire at the chargers instead of the riders, not one of us would have escaped to bear the Admiral's message to the Prince de Condé. The last shot that was received was in my left shoulder, but it was of no importance, and did not even disable my arm.

I now continued my course in safety, but without relaxing my speed, and opened the visor of my casque, both to get some air and to see more distinctly whether we were followed. Such was not the case, however; and I saw, at the top of the hill, the squadrons of the Admiral, and could perceive the group in which he stood, watching my course—perhaps with some anxiety. At the distance of about two miles, I heard the sound of some trumpets, behind a little wood in advance; and, going on at the same quick pace, I came, the moment after, upon some thirty or forty horsemen, covered with

white cassocks, and bearing the cornet of the Prince de Soubise.

"Where is the Prince de Condé?" I demanded. "Where is the Prince? I bear him a message from the Admiral."

"He is coming up that narrow road," replied one of the gentlemen. "Hearing some firing, we supposed that some affair was taking place, and are marching up towards Triac."

"The whole van are engaged," I replied; and, without more words, rode on, and met the Prince at the head of three or four hundred horse, almost all gentlemen of high quality, and distinguished in arms. The Prince was speaking gaily, and the moment he saw me, he exclaimed, "Ah, De Cerons! what news do you bear?—So the enemy has crossed the river, we hear. But, good Heavens! your surcoat is pierced in twenty places, and you are bleeding from the hand and shoulder."

"That is nothing, my lord," I replied. "The enemy have passed the river; the vanguard has been engaged these two hours; and the Admiral has sent me to say to your Highness, that a general battle is inevitable, and to beg you to charge in order to disentangle the advance."

"Instantly," replied the Prince, his bright eye flashing with a light which I never saw anywhere but in them. "Martinet, you ride back instantly, and hurry the advance of the main battle. Chouppes, ride on with Languilliers to Soubise, and you three, with your men, gallop as fast as you can towards Triac, to clear the ground a little till we come up. De Cerons, you stay with me, as you have seen all that is passing, and can guide us well. Now, on my men!" And, putting the whole troop into a quicker pace, he led the way forward, till we came out half-way down the hill up which the royalist army had been advancing when I left the field.

The aspect of everything, however, was now very

much changed; the Admiral had retreated beyond Triac; Brissac occupied the village; Martigue had taken ground to the right thereof; the Duke of Montpensier was at the top of the rise, and the main body of the Catholics, under the Duke of Anjou, occupied the rest of the ground towards Châteauneuf.

The gallant Pluviaut, and his men, stretching out and menacing the flank of Martigue's troops, afforded us, indeed, the means of joining our line to that of the Admiral; and had the whole of the Prince de Condé's division been upon the field, we might still, perhaps, have gained the day, Such not being the case, and, by one accident or another, the Prince having received but tardy information of what was taking place, the situation of the Admiral seemed to all of us who were on the lower ground, more perilous than it really was.

Condé halted for a moment, as if to consider and to communicate with the Admiral; and had it not been for the arrival, at that instant, of a small body of German Protestants, who were with the army, in all probability, such counsels would have been held as would have prevented the fatal results of that day's field. Condé, however, saw our auxiliaries arrive with joy and satisfaction; not that he hoped to save the battle by the rash and desperate conduct he was prepared to pursue, but he thought that, at all events, he should be enabled to disentangle the troops of the Admiral, by a strong diversion in his favour; and the moment that the arrival of the Germans was known, I heard him call loudly for his casque.

At this time, though we were within shot of the arquebusiers, and a ball or two fell every now and then amongst us, he had nothing on his head but a small cap of crimson velvet. The page who bore his helmet, however, came but slowly; the different officers who were round about, pressed up eagerly towards the Prince; the horses were furious and eager to proceed, and Condé himself, having one arm in a sling, from an

accident he had met with, restrained his own charger with difficulty from dashing forward into the midst of the enemy's ranks.

At length the page brought up the casque, and one or two persons were assisting him to place it on his head; his standard had been carried forward, bearing, written in letters of gold, "*Doux le péril pour Christ et le pais!*" the Count of Rochefaucault was mounting a fresh horse, to accompany him into the *mêlée*, and turning round towards me, the Prince was asking, "Know you, De Cerons, whose cornets of horse those are upon the hill?" when in a moment I saw the charger that La Rochefaucault was about to mount, lash out with both his feet towards the Prince, whose horse seemed to stagger with the blow it received.

The velvet cap he had in his hand dropped to the ground, but that was the only expression (if it may be so called) of pain which escaped him. To my horror and consternation, however, I beheld on approaching, that the horse had broken his leg, and that the bone was absolutely protruding through the thick leather boot.

Exclamations of grief and distress burst from the lips of all around: but the Prince waved his hand, exclaiming, "Silence!" And a moment after, he added, "Behold, you true nobles of France, that which has occurred; follow me to finish well what our brave friends have already so well begun, and remember this day as you fight, in what state Louis of Bourbon leads you to the charge '*for Christ and for his country!*'"*

As he spoke, he pulled down the visor of his helmet, bent his head over his saddle-bow, gave the rein to his horse, and dashed like fury upon the flank of the Duke of Anjou's division. We all followed. There was an immense body of men at arms before us, amounting, it is said, in all, to two thousand; and the moment we began

* The translation of the words upon his standard.

the charge, two regiments of reiters, amounting to two thousand five hundred men, and eight hundred lancers, with a small body of horse arquebusiers, swept round and hemmed us in; and yet it is extraordinary what that charge of the Prince de Condé did. There was not one man of us that hour who then spurred on his horse, that did not believe his life was at a close, and that he must sell the remnant dearly.

The light-horse which were in front gave way before us in a moment; the Duke of Guise and his men at arms, were driven back upon La Vallette, the regiments of Chauvigny and Nevers were cast into confusion, and, to use the words of another eye-witness, "In brief, the Prince and his troop seemed like a thunderbolt."

But all that we could do was over in ten minutes. The regiment of the young Prince d'Auvergne came forward to support the rest, and in a gallant charge, separated our small troop into parties; his father, the Duke of Montpensier, wheeled two regiments upon us to support his son; Martigue came down from the hill to have a share in our destruction; and, separated one from the other, we each fought with desperation against the adversary who happened to be nearest to us. I was cutting my way on, attending to little else, dealing the best blows I could with my heavy sword, when I suddenly received a pistol ball in my right arm, which made it drop powerless by my side, and an instant after, before any one could take advantage of my situation, my horse was killed under me, and fell at once to the ground, jamming firmly my right leg between the saddle and the earth, so that, having lost the use of my arm on the same side, it was impossible for me to extricate myself.

The Catholic men at arms who were nearest to me, apparently conceived that I was killed, and one of them passed over me; but I was not only uninjured, except from the wounds I have mentioned, but was also pain-

fully sensible of all the horrors that were passing around me.

It is utterly impossible to give anything like an idea of the scene that took place before my eyes. Sometimes I was left almost totally alone, beholding nothing but clouds of dust, and dim uncertain figures, whirling hither and thither; in another instant one, two, three, perhaps fifty or sixty of the combatants were close about me, with their horses nearly treading upon me at every instant. Thrice, indeed, they did strike me with their hoofs, but my armour luckily protected me.

At length I saw a charger all bloody, mounted by one whose aspect I knew full well. He was then at about twenty yards from me, and was riding rapidly up the hill, to a spot where the ground was somewhat more clear. But at that very instant, two cavaliers, bearing red crosses on their shoulders, galloped fiercely forward upon him, and I saw, that though the horse exerted his utmost force to obey his rider's will, and though the rider still urged him on with eager speed, yet the gallant beast, bleeding from more than one wound, wavered as it struggled on, and the rider, with his head bent low, could scarcely keep himself in the saddle.

The other two, fresh and apparently unhurt, were up with him in a moment; and, seeing that it was in vain to contend, with not a friend near him, without power to resist, without strength either in himself or in his horse to fly, Condé gave his left-hand gauntlet to one of those who approached him, and at the very same moment, his horse stumbled and fell beneath him. As he lay, I saw him raise the visor of his helmet, and show his face to the gentleman to whom he had surrendered, whose name I afterwards found was Argence.

The moment he saw the face of the Prince, Argence sprang from his horse, aided Condé to rise, and then, seeing the state of his leg, bore rather than assisted *him* to the foot of a small hawthorn tree, and placed

his back against the bank that supported it. He was now nearer to me than before, and the next instant two or three other gentlemen came up, and dismounting beside the captive prince, were talking to him in a quiet tone, when Montesquieu, whom I had seen several times before, and knew for his brutality, rode slowly up, and looked down upon me as I lay. My visor being closed, he could not see whether I was dead or alive, and I remained quite still, though I held tight the pistol which I had drawn from my saddle-bow, determined not to surrender to him, but to shoot him with my left hand if he molested me. I believe he was looking for some unarmed point to stab me with his sword, in order to ascertain whether I was living or dead; but not finding any, he had taken his pistol in his hand, as if to shoot me, to make all sure. At that very instant, however, one of the others rode up from the hawthorn tree, saying, "They have taken the Prince de Condé, there, Montesquieu."

"Taken him!" exclaimed the brute, in a furious tone. "Kill him! kill him!—*Morbleu!*" and, dashing forward, he levelled his pistol at the head of the unfortunate Prince, and fired. Condé's head first fell back against the bank; and then, rolling over with a convulsive motion, he sunk dead at the foot of Argence, who turned angrily upon Montesquieu, and seemed to reproach him with what he had done.

After that I saw no more of them, for a company of horse came sweeping along between me and the spot, at a somewhat slow pace, though Martigue was at their head. I knew his character well; though fierce, bold, and courageous as a lion, he was frank and generous-minded, too; and as he passed within about ten paces of me, I called loudly upon his name. He did not hear me himself; but a young officer, who was behind, exclaimed, looking round, "Who calls Monsieur de Martigue?"

"It is I," I cried, lifting up my left hand, "a

gentleman and a knight, who wishes to speak wit him."

The young officer called his commander's attentior who turned his horse, and rode up to me. "Who ar you? and what do you want?" he said, looking dow upon me without dismounting.

"I am De Cerons," I replied, "and of all men in th army wish to surrender to you," and at the same tim I raised my visor.

"Ah, you young tiger!" he cried; "have I got you If I did right, I believe, I should drop a lance into you But, however, I suppose that must not be, and so I will give you some supper instead; for you have lost the day, young man, as I suppose you know."

"But too well," I replied, sadly; and Martigue, turning to some of those who followed, said, "There, help him up, and take care of him. Look to his wounds, too; for it is a pity that any one who has gone through a day like this, should die at the end of it."

Thus saying, he rode on and left me.

CHAPTER XVI.

A PAGE, a soldier, and one of the valets who were following Martigue through the field, disentangled me from my horse, and raised me, with care and kindness, from the ground. For some time I could scarcely walk, from the stiffness and bruises consequent upon the horse falling upon my leg and thigh. I made a great effort to do so, however, and the men who accompanied me asked me if I were hurt in the leg. I replied I was not; and, being soon stripped of my armour, I was enabled to move more easily. My right arm, however, still continued powerless, and the people who had me in charge led me away, according to Martigue's orders, to seek for

a surgeon. The only men of skill, it seems, who accompanied the Catholic army, were to be found with the division of the Duke of Anjou, and in searching for them, we passed through several bodies of men that were advancing rapidly towards Jarnac. All, however, was now passing quietly; the battle was over, the Protestant army in full flight, the victory secured, and I felt not the slightest apprehension that either insult or injury would be offered to any fair combatant, wounded and a prisoner. Thus passing on, with Martigue's people, without a harsh word being said to me, I came near a gallant body of cavaliers, brilliantly armed, and equipped with the finest horses in the field, and followed by another glittering band of evidently picked men. There might be twenty or thirty gentlemen in advance, and some four hundred behind, and I saw there the Duke of Montpensier, and the Prince d'Auvergne his son.

They were no longer, however, occupying the first rank; for, about half a yard before either of them, rode a young man—in fact, scarcely more than a boy, for he did not yet seem twenty years of age. His arms were covered with a rich surcoat, and on one side of his horse, a page on foot carried his casque, while another bore a lance on the other side. Everything about his person and his charger was glittering and splendid; and the *fleur-de-lis* which were profusely scattered over all his accoutrements at once marked him as the Duke of Anjou.

The little party by which I was led along made way instantly for the others to pass, and I took no notice of the Prince's countenance till some one called us up before him. I then lifted my eyes, and considered him attentively while he spoke to Martigue's page, whom he seemed to have recognised. He was certainly handsome, and there was something commanding in his figure and deportment; but there was also a sinister expression about his eyes which was not pleasant, and

there was a peculiarity in his countenance which, in the course of my whole life, I have only seen in two other men besides himself. It was, that, as long as he remained grave and serious, though somewhat stern, the expression was not so bad; but the moment that he smiled, it made one's blood run cold. After speaking two words to the page, he turned to me, saying, sternly, "Do you know whether the Prince de Condé has escaped from the field?"

"Only by death, sir," I replied.

"Why," answered the Duke, "I saw his great white standard, myself, with some thirty or forty men, fly across the upland twenty minutes ago."

"The Prince, sir," I said, "is dead, depend upon it. I, with my own eyes, saw him murdered."

"Murdered!" exclaimed the Duke of Anjou, with that same sort of sinister smile coming over his face. "What call you murder, sweet friend, in such a field as this?"

"Shooting a man, sir," I replied, "after he has been received to quarter, and surrendered to honourable gentlemen."

"It may be justice, not murder, sir," replied the Duke, frowning upon me. "And pray who are you who are so choice in your expressions?"

"My name, sir," I replied, "is De Cerons, and I, too, am a prisoner."

"Ah!" cried the Duke, "the most insolent varlet in the camp of the rebels. We have heard of your doings."

Though I knew it might cost me my life, I could not restrain myself, and I replied, "Not a varlet, sir, but a knight and a French gentleman."

"Take him away, and—" cried the Duke; but, before he could finish his sentence, which, probably, was intended to have been a command to treat me in the same way as the Prince de Condé, the Duke of Montpensier urged his horse forward, and spoke a word or two to the Duke, in a low tone.

"Take him away!" repeated the Duke, after listening

for a moment. "Put him with that Scotch marauder, Stuart, and bring them before me after supper to-night. Yet, stay," he continued. "Where, think you, lies the Prince de Condé? I would fain see him with my own eyes."

"If you go straight towards yon tree," I replied, pointing with my hand, "you will find his body under the bank, unless they have removed it."

"Go you, Magnac, and see," said the Duke. "I will remain here. There is your man, Coustoureau, coming up, Montpensier. He knows the Prince; let him go with Magnac. Stand there, sir; we shall soon see whether you speak truth or falsehood."

I made no reply, and the Baron de Magnac and another gentleman rode on to see if they could discover the body of the unfortunate Prince de Condé. While they were gone, the deepest stillness pervaded the whole scene. There was a sort of awful expectation about those who knew not whether I had spoken the truth or not, which kept all silent, and it was evident that the Duke of Anjou himself, though he strove to appear perfectly calm and unmoved, concealed various emotions under the stern and harsh aspect which he assumed. He spoke not either, but remained gazing forward in the direction which his messengers had taken, though the number of persons scattered about in different directions, and the bodies of horse and foot moving to and fro, prevented his distinguishing them, after they had gone a hundred yards.

At length, however, we saw a crowd of people coming forward in an irregular mass, with something carried on in the midst of them, and, as they approached the Duke of Anjou, one of the most painful and horrible sights that I ever beheld was exposed to view.

Stripped of his armour, and even of the buff coat which he wore underneath, his shirt and person dabbled with blood and dirt, was the body of the unfortunate Prince de Condé cast across an ass, with the head hanging

down on one side, and the feet on the other. His hair, which was long and very beautiful, fell in glossy curls towards the ground, but, from the points of the locks, near the face, the blood, still streaming from his death wound, dropped slowly upon the dusty ground, as they bore him along, and made a small pool, when the body stopped before the feet of the Duke of Anjou's horse. However much he might be changed since I had seen him, I knew the body at once, by the lace, and the violet-coloured ribbons which tied the sleeves of his shirt, which I had remarked particularly as he was putting on his casque, at the moment when the horse had kicked him.

"Are you sure that it is he?" said the Duke of Anjou. "Lift up his head, Magnac; one cannot see his face."

The Baron de Magnac twined his fingers in his hair, and lifted up his face, exposing the ghastly wound from which he died, and which had so terribly disfigured him, that, what with blood and dirt, and the black smoke of the pistol, his features could hardly be recognised by any one. When I thought of that same countenance, as I had seen it but a few weeks before, smiling with gay and kindly feelings, as he laid the blade of knighthood on my shoulder, and compared it with the dark mutilated object before me, I myself could scarcely have told that it was the same, had it not been for the other marks I have mentioned.

"Some one bring water from the stream," cried the Duke of Anjou. "We must wash his face and see."

The water was soon brought in a morion, and, when the blood and dirt were washed away, there was no difficulty in recognising the features of the unfortunate Prince.

"Get a sheet from some of the farm-houses," cried the Duke of Anjou, "and carry the body on to Jarnac. You have told truth, sir," he added, turning to me. "Now get you gone. Do with him as I bade you. Put him with the Scotchman, and bring him up this night."

Thus saying, he rode on himself, and I was conducted to the rear, where a surgeon visited my wounds, and, finding my right arm broken, set it, as best he might. They then led me for about two miles on the road to Jarnac, and there brought me to a farm-house, where they placed me in a small room, with several other prisoners, amongst whom I found La Noue, and the Prince de Soubise, but not Stuart.

All, as well might be supposed, were deeply depressed, but that did not prevent a great deal of conversation from taking place, and there were fewer lamentations over our defeat itself than over the negligence of those who had occasioned it, by suffering the enemy to pass the river. La Loue, whose turn it had been to guard the bridge of Châteauneuf, was very much blamed, as he might have defended it long; and certain it is, that, even had the enemy forced the passage, the delay which a struggle would have occasioned might have given us a chance of victory; for it was afterwards ascertained that not one-sixth part of the Protestant cavalry, and not one-tenth of the Protestant infantry arrived within a league of the field of battle till the whole was over. The truth is, that not above four thousand men were ever at one time engaged upon our part.

The discussion of these events had been going on for some time before I was brought in, and I soon found that the worst news of the whole, the death of the Prince de Condé, was still unknown amongst the leaders taken. When I told them the fact, however, I could scarcely get them to believe it, so horrible and improbable seemed the action that Montesquieu had committed. If I had told them that the Prince had fallen by some chance blow, or had been shot in fair fight, they would have given me credit at once; but I found them even more incredulous than the Catholics had been; and Soubise insisted that I must have made a mistake in the person, for that Argence would never have suffered Montesquieu to kill a prince of the blood-royal in his hands.

About four o'clock, the rest of the prisoners were removed, and marched on towards Jarnac; but I was ordered to remain, and I continued alone in the room of the farm for about a quarter of an hour, suffering intense torture from the wound in my right arm, and giving myself up, in solitude, to every sad and gloomy thought and expectation that it was possible for imagination to conjure up.

At the end of that time the door of the room again opened, and Stuart was brought in; but, oh, how changed since the preceding night! He was wounded in two or three places, though not dangerously in any, yet the loss of blood had turned him very pale, and he walked with difficulty. But it was not so much in his colour or his gait that the change was remarkable; it was in the deep profound melancholy that had fallen upon him.

"I grieve to meet you here, Stuart," I said, shaking him by the hand.

"And so grieve I for you, De Cerons," replied he. "I wish it had been God's will, De Cerons, that I had died three hours ago; but the villains would not kill me, though I refused them quarter, and asked none myself. They knew better: they knew better."

"But, good God!" I said, "they will never think of butchering their prisoners now?"

"You do not know Henri of Anjou," replied Stuart. "But I know very well, De Cerons, that I have not long to live. In my case, whether I speak him fair or not, there are things to be remembered which he will not forget. But on your part take my advice; if you see him, speak him fair, and perhaps you may save your life thereby. My day is done, De Cerons;" and seating himself by the table, he leaned his brow upon his hand, and fell into deep thought.

At length he started up again, saying, "If you should live and get free, De Cerons, remember the dagger. It *is with* my baggage, which I trust is safe; for these

Catholic tigers, it is evident, have won but a fruitless victory. Yet my people, perhaps, may not give it up.—Stay, if we can get materials for writing, I will make an acknowledgment that it is yours." And rising, he knocked hard at the door, which was locked. One of the soldiers immediately came; but it was some time before Stuart could procure what he wanted. At length, however, it came; and in haste, but with great precision, he wrote down the acknowledgment, and gave it to me.

He had scarcely done so, when we were ordered to march on towards Jarnac; and under a small guard of soldiers, set out on foot for that place, which we reached shortly after dark. We were then conveyed to a small room on the ground-floor of the castle, where some food was given to us and a fire, for it was very cold. I had never been a prisoner before myself, but I had always seen the prisoners treated differently; and I could not but think that this long foot march of two wounded gentlemen was somewhat harsh.

I noticed the fact to Stuart, who said, "It is not a sign of the times, De Cerons; but it is a sign of the Duke of Anjou. There is not another commander in France who would have treated noble prisoners as he has done this day. However to me it matters little; my account with this world is made; and as soon as I have taken some nourishment, for I feel faint, I must try and make my peace with God."

After eating a small quantity, and drinking a cup of wine mingled with water, he turned away, and kneeling in the most distant part of the room, remained for several minutes in prayer. He then rose, and spoke more cheerfully, or perhaps I should say more calmly; and in about half an hour we were both summoned to the presence of the Duke. At the door of our room we found two or three guards, who led us on up some dark steps, and then through a door into a long and wide but low stone gallery, with a large grey column every three or

four steps, supporting the pointed vault of the roof. It was tolerably well lighted with torches placed here and there, and on the left side was a row of windows, while on the right was a row of doors between the columns.

At the third pillar from the entrance, two or three people were gathered round a large sort of stone table close underneath the column; and, as I passed, I saw that on it was stretched the corpse of the Prince de Condé, the body wrapped in linen with some degree of decency, but the head and face exposed. Those who were gazing upon it took no notice of us as we advanced, and at the very further end of the hall we paused for the first time, before a door where stood a man at arms with his sword drawn.

One of those who accompanied us went in, and the next minute Stuart was called into the room beyond, while I remained without. I could hear nothing that passed; but I was not a little anxious and apprehensive for my poor comrade.

At length my name was called, and I passed on through the door into a small passage which led to an inner room; it could scarcely be called the antechamber of the Duke's apartment, for it was not above eight feet long and five or six in width. It was tapestried, however, and there was a lamp against the wall, but the door of the chamber beyond was partly open, and a great light streamed forth.

The moment that the other door closed behind me I could hear the voice of the Duke of Anjou exclaiming aloud and somewhat angrily,

"Away with the Scotch assassin! Away with him!"

And as I entered the room, I saw Stuart standing close by the door, with a tall, dark-looking man, grasping him by the shoulder. My noble comrade's head, however, was raised and dignified; there was a bright red flush upon his brow, and his cheek was now anything but pale; while his right hand was stretched out, not exactly in the attitude of menace, but still boldly and fearlessly,

"Take back the word assassin, Prince," he said; "I am none. Had your false Constable died by my hand in fight, as would to Heaven he had! he would have died well and deservedly, as the man who attempts to kill the person to whom he has surrendered, merits by every law of arms. I am no assassin: it is you who butcher prisoners in cold blood. But I warn you the time shall come—ay, and the knife that shall do it is even now sharpened—when you shall regret the blood that you now wantonly spill, as the hand of some other butcher like yourself takes a life that you have misused too long. Now fare you well! Do your will! I care not how soon it comes!"

Thus saying, he turned away; he looked at me for an instant, as if he would have spoken to me in passing, but in that moment I could see his features change. I feel convinced that he recollected he might do me injury by any token of friendship, and therefore it was he passed me as if he had never seen me before.

The moment he was gone and the door closed, the Duke of Anjou pronounced my name; but before I could answer, I heard one or two blows struck without, a short cry suppressed into a groan, and then a heavy fall.

"Seigneur de Cerons!" repeated the voice of the Duke of Anjou, in a fierce tone; and turning towards the table, I saw that Prince's countenance extremely red, while the faces of all those who were standing around were deadly pale. I have never been accustomed to set any great value upon life, but I never, in the course of my existence, felt so utterly careless of living and dying as I did at that moment. The great event seemed close upon me; and I advanced to the table as calmly as if I had been going to sit down to meat. The Duke of Anjou fixed his eyes upon me, and again there came upon his countenance that unpleasant smile, which, whether I interpreted it right or wrong I know not, seemed to argue anything but good.

"You appear alarmed," said the Duke, gazing at me.

"If so, my lord," I replied, "my countenance must sadly belie my heart."

"Then you fear nothing," he said. "We shall soon see how you will bear your fate."

"Very probably, your Highness," I replied, "as other men bear theirs; though, as to fear, I am as free from it as your Highness."

Amongst the various officers who stood behind the Duke, two made me a sign at this moment. The Duke of Montpensier pointed to the door through which Stuart had just passed, then lifted his hand, as if to beseech me to be silent. Martigue, though evidently friendly towards me, knit his brows and shook his fist at me. But the Duke of Anjou, after gazing on me for a moment, exclaimed, "What babblers and braggarts these Huguenots are! Take the Maheutre out, and hang him to one of the spouts of the castle!"

"I beg your Highness's pardon," said Martigue, advancing with a frank and somewhat jocular air: "you will recollect he is my prisoner; and, before you hang him, you must pay me fifteen hundred crowns for his ransom."

"Oh, I will pay you, I will pay you, Martigue," replied the Prince.

"I will give no credit," replied Martigue, in the same tone. "Down upon the table, my lord, or you don't have him! A hanged man is no good to me, and, I should think, none to your Highness either."

"I should think not, indeed," said one of the gentlemen who stood behind: "besides, my lord, I really do not know anything that Monsieur de Cerons has done, either against your Highness or his Majesty's service, which should excite your indignation against him: besides, he is a knight, my lord."

"Has he not done plenty?" exclaimed the Duke, still maintaining his anger, although he had smiled upon Martigue. "A knight! Hav'n't I heard that he is a

mere marauder, cutting off our parties, stealing into our camp as a spy, setting fire to villages? I say, is he not a mere marauder?"

Perhaps the love of existence had grown upon me, as I heard the question of life and death discussed; but at all events, I had a very strong objection to hanging from one of the spouts of the castle of Jarnac. The Duke looked towards me as he asked for the second time, if I were not a marauder, and I replied, "Your Highness has been greatly misinformed. I am no marauder, but acting under a commission from the Princes of the Protestant league. Neither can it ever be said of me, sir, or of one single man under my command, that we have ever sacked or pillaged a Catholic house, that we have ever drawn the sword against any unarmed man, or that we have demanded one shilling of contribution from any village in which we lodged. The bare walls of the house in which I was quartered, was all that I ever required; and my purse has always been ready to pay for everything that I took."

"That is more than his Highness, or any one else here, can say," cried Martigue; and the Duke himself burst into a loud laugh.

"Allow me to add," I said, "that my entering your Highness's camp, though somewhat bold, was in no degree as a spy; for I came with my men at my back, and all of us armed to the teeth: neither was there any great harm in coming to rescue a relation, which was our sole object; nor did we injure any one, till we were ourselves attacked."

"Ay!" cried the Duke; "and, if I remember right, your cousin rewarded you by refusing to go."

"You must be a poor mouse, Monsieur de Cerons," cried Martigue, laughing, and evidently trying to set the Prince in good humour again,—"you must be a poor mouse to get into the trap, and not to get the bait after all."

"Ay, but the mouse not only got out of the trap," I

replied, "but bit the rat-catcher's fingers. Was it not so, Monsieur Martigue?"

"Ha! he has you there, Martigue," cried the Duke. "What say you now? Will you hang him in revenge for the loss of that cornet?"

"I say, sir," replied Martigue, gaily, "that the young gentleman speaks very true. The mouse did bite the rat-catcher's fingers, and bit him to the bone. But the rat-catcher has caught him at last, and, by your Highness's good leave, will keep him now he's got him."

It was evident that some progress had been made in moving the Duke of Anjou, and at that moment the Duke of Montpensier joined in.

"I told your Highness this morning," he said, "that it was my intention to ask a boon of you, in regard to Monsieur de Cerons; but, as your Highness knows, I intercede for no one without good reason. In the first place, let me say that this gentleman, instead of being a mere marauder, as some one has induced your Highness to believe, is perhaps the most generous and scrupulous of the enemy's party. I can speak of the accounts given of him by the peasantry myself; and besides, I have had certain information from a gentleman who saw it in the town of Pons, that he was there known to cut down one of his own men, for some of the horrors too frequently committed in a town taken by assault. But this is not all, sir: I personally owe him a deep debt of gratitude for saving the life of my son, and sending him back into the camp, without demanding a ransom."

"What! your son, Montpensier?" exclaimed the Duke,—"what! D'Auvergne?"

"Neither more nor less, my Lord," replied the Duke. "When we decamped from the neighbourhood of Loudun, Monsieur de Cerons led those that pursued. My son turned to drive them back. In the *mêlée* he was borne to the ground, and was absolutely under the feet of Monsieur de Cerons' horse. That gentleman helped *him* to rise; and, telling him to mount in haste, suffered

him to retire unhurt. Under these circumstances, not only must I beg his life of your Highness—if you ever seriously thought of putting him to death, which I do not believe; but I would also offer to pay his ransom at once to Monsieur de Martigue, and set him free, only that I trust, by keeping him here in our camp for a little time, we may cure him of some prejudices of education, and gain a very distinguished soldier back to religion and to loyalty. Such gentlemen as Monsieur de Cerons, my lord, are far better worth winning than hanging, depend upon it."

"You will ruin us all,—you will ruin us all!" cried a voice from behind, which I found afterwards came from the well-known Chicot. "If you convert Monsieur de Cerons, and bring him into our camp, the army's lost, the King's throne shaken, and he may play at bowls with the globe and crown. Why, heavens and earth! wasn't it bad enough when we had only Martigue to lead us into every mad adventure, while the Huguenots, on their part, had this mad fellow to run his head against our crack-brained galloper. If you bring over another such to our side to match Martigue, the army will be like a string between two young dogs, pulled here and there over every bush and hill and fence, through the whole land. 'Pon my soul, I had hoped and trusted that I should hear Martigue was killed to-day; for I am tired to death, and my brain quite weary with thinking where he will be next: but if you come to add to him this same night-walking spectre of cast-iron, there is no chance of any one ever having a moment's repose through life."

"Pray attend to Chicot's reasons, your Highness," said Martigue; "for, like some old verses that I've met with, they always read the wrong way, you know."

"Well," said the Prince, "if you will all have it so, so it must be, I suppose; but, at all events, I shall expect no slight apology from Monsieur de Cerons for the rash and insolent words he addressed to me this morning."

"I trust, sir," I replied, "that in my grief for the

disasters of this day, I have not been mad enough to address to your Highness, the brother of my King, any words of insolence whatever. I am quite ignorant and unconscious of having done so, but beg your Highness's pardon most sincerely and most humbly for anything that could have been construed to that effect."

"That is well—that is well," replied the Duke: "you must, indeed, have forgotten yourself; but the words that you spoke, sir, about the Prince de Condé were rash and insolent."

"But were never applicable to your Highness," I replied. "They were entirely and totally meant for and pointed at the Baron de Montesquieu, the cold-blooded murderer of a gallant Prince; and I am sure, sir, that had you seen the act as I did, your generous nature would have been roused in a moment to avenge the butchery of your cousin upon his foul assassin."

"Perhaps it might," replied the Prince: but the Duke of Montpensier, who knew that such discussions with the Duke of Anjou became dangerous in every point of view when carried too far, took advantage of a slight thoughtful pause to say, "I think your Highness graciously granted my request?"

The Prince bowed his head, and Montpensier, passing round the table, took me by the arm, nodding to Martigue, who replied, if I might read his looks, "Get him away as fast as you can."

The Prince, however, detained us for a moment longer, saying, "I will speak to Monsieur de Cerons at some future time: his countenance pleases me."

"No reply," whispered the Duke of Montpensier; and, merely bowing my head low as my answer, I followed through the door. In that little passage antechamber, however, my first step was into a pool of dark blood, and I was about to draw back with an exclamation of horror, when the Duke pulled me on sharply by the left arm; and after we had gone several paces down the gallery, he said, in a low, deep tone,—

"Young man! young man! you have been sporting with a tiger who has already torn one to pieces, and has got the thirst for blood upon him strong!"

CHAPTER XVII.

To the Duke of Montpensier's words I made no reply, as there were several persons not far off at the time, and I feared that whatever I might say at such a moment would be less calm and temperate than I could have wished it. The Duke added nothing more; but led me on, past the spot where the body of the Prince de Condé lay, to the lower story of the building, where we found, not far from the room in which I had been at first confined, a considerable body of my conductor's attendants, with his son, the Prince d'Auvergne. The moment the young man saw me, he started forward, and grasped my hand, exclaiming, "He is safe! he is safe!"

"He is so," replied the Duke; "but it is not his own fault that he is not now lying stark and cold, as some others that I could name. Take him away with you, D'Auvergne, to our quarters, and, for Heaven's sake, teach him to be cautious where he is. Monsieur de Cerons," he continued, turning to me, "I need not ask you whether I have your parole."

"Of course, my lord," I replied, "of course; I surrendered voluntarily to Monsieur Martigue, and by the same right that I claim my life, not as a matter of grace, but as a matter of justice, I consider myself as a prisoner till my ransom is granted and paid."

The Duke bowed his head and left me, and the Prince d'Auvergne, with his attendants, led me out into the streets of Jarnac, where, with several torches before us, we proceeded to the lower part of the town, and entered a large dwelling, which had been taken possession of by the Duke of Montpensier. A good deal to my surprise, for I had as yet seen nothing but the Huguenot camp, I

found nearly as much splendour and luxury reigning in the temporary abode of the Catholic commander, as if he had been in the mansion of his ancestors. There were servants in magnificent dresses, there were lights in all the rooms, and the Prince led me into a hall where a large table was set out as if for the supper of some twenty or thirty persons.

"My father," he said, "will soon return; but till he does so, Monsieur de Cerons, let us go into this little room beyond, and converse for a few moments quietly."

He then led me in, asked after the wounds I had received; spoke to me of the different events of the late battle; and mentioned the death of the Prince de Condé with so much kindly and noble feeling, that had not my mind been altogether prepossessed in his favour before, those words would have attached me to him for ever. He then gave me several cautions with regard to my conduct during my stay in the Catholic camp.

"Neither my father nor myself," he said, "would wish you to abandon your opinions, except upon full conviction; but, at the same time, it will be much better for you, as far as possible, to restrain any expression of those opinions, for there are dangerous men around us all, and you might place yourself in situations from which it might be difficult, if not impossible, to extricate you."

I promised to follow his counsel; and then, judging from his conversation that he must have more experience in the ways of courts and camps than I had imagined, I asked him if this was the first campaign in which he had served.

"Oh, no!" he replied; "I am older than I appear, Monsieur de Cerons."

And I found that such, indeed, was the case; but that in him there was the extraordinary combination of high powers of mind and considerable experience, with unpresuming modesty, and all the frank, quick emotions of boyhood. I remarked afterwards something fine and noble, too, in the demeanour of the father to the son,

and the son to the father. The Duke felt all the eager apprehensions and tender anxiety for the young Prince that he had felt when his son was a youth, flew always to his succour in the battle-field, and seemed unwilling to yield the affectionate privilege of guiding, guarding, and defending his boy; but, at the same time, he was aware and proud of his son's high qualities, had every confidence in his mind and judgment, and treated his opinions with that respect which insured the respect of others. The son, on his part, though well aware of his own capability of directing and defending himself, ever showed the deepest gratitude for his father's tenderness, and reverence for his authority and advice.

We had not been long in conversation, when some steps were heard in the other hall, and the voice of the Duke of Montpensier exclaiming, "Where are you, Francis? Where is Monsieur de Cerons?"

In another moment the Duke entered the room, before his son could go to meet him, having been accompanied by Martigue, who entered the little room with him, and by several others, who remained behind in the supper-room.

The moment he came in, Martigue seized me roughly by the collar on both sides of my buff coat, and gave me a strong but friendly shake, exclaiming, "You young scoundrel, you owe me double ransom, I swear." And as he spoke, the old soldier looked me over from head to foot with the eye of a connoisseur, as if calculating what portion of strength there was in my limbs.

"Upon my honour, Monsieur de Martigue," I replied, "I think I do, for you have certainly once spared my life, and once saved it."

"You are honest, you are honest!" replied Martigue, in the same tone; "but here I and Monsieur de Montpensier have been quarrelling for you. He says he will keep you here at all events till your wounds are whole, to try if he cannot cure you of Calvinism, or at all events teach you to serve the King in another way than fighting

his troops and cutting the throats of his subjects. I want you to be put to ransom directly, in order that you and I may, some day or another before long, have a fair opportunity of trying our right hands; for we have not had it out yet, seeing that you got off in such a shabby way this morning by shooting my horse."

"I could not help it, Monsieur de Martigue," I replied, "or I would not have done it. I was in the midst of your people; and if I had not taken that moment to escape, I must have surrendered to them even if I had got the better of you. However, I surely made up for it afterwards."

"What! in the village?" cried Martigue. "Oh, I never got near you there."

"No," I replied, "but after that unfortunate *mêlée*, I made up my mind that I would surrender to none but you if I could help it, and lay still there while twenty people passed, till I saw you come up."

"By the Lord, you might have done worse!" cried Martigue. "If Montluc had got hold of you, he would have given you a pistol-shot for your pains. By the way, it was shrewd of you, Monsieur de Montpensier, to send Montluc away towards Cognac; for, by heavens! if he had been at the ear of Monseigneur to-night, instead of quiet people like ourselves, there is no knowing what would have come of it."

"The streets of Jarnac would have flowed with blood," replied the Duke; "however, Monsieur de Cerons, you are now safe; and I have to inform you that Monsieur de Martigue consents to receive your ransom from me; so that you are now my prisoner. I trust I may add, also, that you are my son's friend, and, therefore, I will beg you to remain with us for some few weeks, as I have every reason to believe that ere long matters will assume a more pacific aspect, and that the contentions which now desolate France will be brought to an end without your taking any farther share therein."

I had no choice but to obey; for, of course, I could

not compel them to set me at liberty before they thought fit. I knew, also, that, for the time, I was unable, on account of my wounds, to do any effectual service in the field, and, therefore, I regretted less to be thus detained a prisoner.

When all this was settled, the Duke informed me that he intended to send a flag the next morning to the Admiral, and that, if I chose it, I could communicate at the same time with any of my friends in the camp, and give any orders concerning my baggage and attendants that I might think fit. This information was gratifying to me in several respects, but in none more than inasmuch as it showed me that the Admiral had been enabled to save a large portion of the Huguenot army and all the baggage.

I took advantage of the Duke's offer then, to send word to Moric Endem to take the command of my troop till my return, to despatch three horses and two horse-boys to join me immediately; and, carrying the small chest, in which I had placed the ransom of Monsieur de Jersay with the other money, to the Admiral, to beg him to open it, and divide a thousand crowns amongst the men of my troop, requesting further that, after sending me a thousand crowns, he would put the rest in safety for me till the Catholics admitted me to ransom. I wrote these directions down at once by the Duke's desire, as the messenger was to set off early on the following morning; and, ere I had done, for it took me some time to write with my left hand, one of the sewers announced to the Duke that supper was upon the table.

"You look pale and worn, Monsieur de Cerons," said the Duke. "My principal officers sup with me to-night; pray come and take some refreshment, after which you shall retire to a chamber prepared for you, and I will send my own surgeon to attend you, for I see you are somewhat hurt."

Thus saying he left me, and finishing what I was

writing, I directed it on the back to Moric Endem, with a few words stating that, if he was not to be found, it was to be given to the Admiral. I then followed to the supper-table, at which the Duke was now seated, surrounded by a number of distinguished men, but with a seat reserved for me amongst them; and I must say that I never in my life met with more kindness and courtesy than greeted me at the Duke of Montpensier's table, though but a prisoner.

The Duke and the Prince both pressed me to eat, but the wound in my arm had given me excessive pain during the whole evening; my shoulder was burning and inflamed; I felt bruised, fevered, sick, and weary; and before my eyes, as I sat at the table, were floating continually vague images of all the terrible scenes and events that I had been witness to during that day. It may well be conceived, therefore, that I loathed the very sight of food, and yet every moment I felt myself becoming more and more faint. I saw the eyes of the Prince d'Auvergne fix upon me from time to time, and at length he sent round one of the attendants, who was pouring out for him some choice wine, to carry the flagon to me. I held the cup for him, thinking that the wine might revive me; but as I did so and turned my head somewhat suddenly, all the objects in the room seemed to swim around me, and I fell back senseless on the floor of the hall.

When I was recovered in some degree, I found myself in bed in a very comfortable room, with a gentleman in the dress of a surgeon beside me, and two or three attendants around. I have only a very vague recollection, however, of what passed on that occasion, for I was during the whole night in a state approaching delirium, with wild, vague images of the battle, and its consequences rising up before my mind the moment I closed my eyes to sleep. Now I was in the midst of the enemy again, fighting hand to hand with Martigue; then he suddenly changed to the Prince de Condé, and

by some strange process of the imagination I became Montesquieu, and was about to shoot him under the bank, hating myself all the time for what I was doing, yet hurried on irresistibly to accomplish it. Then, suddenly, a strong hand seemed to seize me, and I found myself a prisoner; and at other times I beheld the gallant Prince who had fallen, as he sat before the last fatal charge, raising his hand towards the white banner above his head, and addressing those last, terrible, memorable words to us who surrounded him.

In such wild visions passed the whole night; but an hour or two before daybreak I fell into a somewhat sounder sleep; and when I awoke just after the dawn, I found the Prince d'Auvergne sitting beside me, and speaking, in a low voice, to one of the attendants.

"Oh, is that you, monseigneur?" I said, turning partly towards him.

"Yes, Monsieur de Cerons," he replied, "I did not like to wake you, because the attendant tells me you have had a bad night; but, as you are awake, I may as well ask you if there is anything that I can do for you this morning, as I am going with the rest of the officers to the field of battle to inquire into the loss on either side, and to make arrangements in regard to the wounded and the dead. I fear that you must, like most of us, have some friend there."

"Several, I doubt not, my lord," I replied; "but, of course, my principal care must be for my own people. Should you find amongst the prisoners or the wounded any men belonging to my band, I trust that you will have them kindly treated for my sake. There is one poor lad, indeed, for whom I am anxious to make inquiries. He is named Andriot, and followed me to the field, not as a man at arms, but merely as an attendant; he fell upon the slope of the hill, about half a mile from Triac, in face of Monsieur de Brissac's arquebusiers."

"I will not fail to make inquiries for him," replied the Prince, "and for the others also; and I will report

to you, as soon as I return, what has been done. It may be late, however, before I do come back; and in the mean time, I understand the surgeon has left especial orders, that you should not quit your bed on any account whatever."

I would fain have risen, but the Prince insisted so strongly upon my obeying the surgeon's commands to the letter, that I promised him to do so, and soon found the benefit of yielding to better knowledge than my own.

After remaining for an hour, or somewhat more, in sorrowful but less whirling thoughts than during the preceding evening I had been able to obtain, exhaustion and weakness again brought on sleep, but of a far more calm and beneficial character; and, till nearly four o'clock in the evening, I enjoyed a long lapse of peaceful slumber.

At length I woke, and found a servant still with me, with whom I talked for some time on the rumours of the day, and found, much to my satisfaction, that a large force of Protestants occupied Cognac, and that the rest of the army had effected its retreat in complete safety to the town of Sainctes. Very few prisoners were said to have been taken, and the whole baggage of the Protestant army had, it seems, been saved. The attendant, however, spoke confidently of Cognac being attacked the next day, talked of the Protestant cause as utterly ruined and hopeless, and exalted the virtues, skill, and courage of the Duke of Anjou to the very skies. Remembering the warning I had received on the preceding night, I made no reply, but only asked questions to which he very willingly returned an answer.

In the midst of our conversation, however, I heard irregular foot-falls without, as if those of some lame person approaching the chamber, and in a moment or two after, not a little to my satisfaction, poor Andriot hobbled in, supporting himself upon a stick. The same ball, it seems, which had killed his horse had wounded him also in the leg, and though the man was by no

means a coward, and, I believe, was perfectly insensible of anything like nervous agitation, he avoided from that moment every scene of strife, declaring deliberately that wounds in the leg were not comfortable.

I was visited, at a later period on the same night, by the Prince d'Auvergne, and on the following day was permitted to rise, and spent an hour in the morning with the Duke of Montpensier. The Duke and his son both showed me the very greatest kindness: but there was not the slightest word said about admitting me to ransom, and I remarked that the subject was carefully avoided. In the evening, my horses and the grooms I had sent for arrived, together with the money, and a letter from Moric Endem, which was couched in the following terms:—

"MONSEIGNEUR,

"I have never seen any one comport himself better in a hot *mêlée* than you did yesterday, which must console you for being taken prisoner, and for having to pay a ransom, which is always, of course, the most unpleasant thing that can happen to any gentleman adventurer. I dare say for a person of your kidney it would have been pleasanter, take it upon the whole, to be killed outright by the side of our brave Prince. I have often heard gentlemen—that is to say, young gentlemen—say such things; but I never could manage to feel anything of the kind myself, always looking upon a live ass to be a great deal better than a dead lion. I have not the slightest doubt, therefore, that some time or another hereafter, you will find it a very comfortable thing indeed to be alive; and you will have the advantage, too, of being able to get yourself killed another time in case you like it.

"In the mean time, I will do my best to lead the troop as you have done, and I trust we shall have plenty of plunder to give an account of when you come back again. The enemy are not so successful at that work

as we are, and you will be glad to hear that all the baggage is quite safe. I have taken the chest to the Admiral as you commanded, and have distributed the thousand crowns amongst the men, who are very grateful, and I send you the thousand that you require for yourself, together with the Admiral's receipt for the remainder, amounting to three thousand seven hundred and sixty crowns of the sun, with two livres tournois, six sous, and two deniers. I am sorry to tell you that we have lost no less than thirteen men, of whom nine were killed or disabled before you quitted us on the hill. Poor Moriton we got off, but he died last night, having been shot very funnily by two arquebuse balls at the same moment, which must have touched each other, for they made a long wound just like a keyhole. I have kept his cuirass, poor fellow, for one may live many a day without seeing such a thing as that. I myself have lost the tip of my right ear, which is no great loss after all, for it only makes that one match the left, the end of which was shot off some years ago by a mad fellow called Chicot. I send you below a list of our killed and wounded, and am

"Your devoted servant,

"MORIC ENDEM."

With this curious epistle was a brief note from the Admiral, acknowledging the receipt of the money, and telling me that though, of course, it was necessary to arrange the liberation of the elder and more experienced officers in the first instance, he would not forget me when it came to my turn. The words were words of course, and I certainly did not expect that the Admiral would think of the matter much more, which in fact he did not do.

Towards night, the Duke of Montpensier himself came back to Jarnac, and I saw that he was a good deal mortified, annoyed, and thoughtful. After supper, he somewhat recovered himself, and I then found from what he said, that the efforts of the Catholics upon Cognac

had been repelled, successfully, at every point, and the army obliged to withdraw. Shortly after this period, the Duke entered my chamber one morning early, saying, "Monsieur de Cerons, I come to take leave of you for a time. The army is about to march, the surgeon thinks it is not fit that you should advance as rapidly as we do, and it is, therefore, my wish that you should proceed by slow stages to my house at Champigny, where a part of my attendants are about to go. You will there find every convenience. I have written to prepare my people for your reception, and I consider you still, you must remember, upon parole."

"It must be as you think fit, my lord," I replied, "but I trust it will not be long before you kindly name my ransom, and set me at liberty."

The Duke turned to me with a kindly expression of countenance, and replied, "Believe me, Monsieur de Cerons, I have your interests nearly at heart. My son and I are not persons whose affections are given by halves. I have consulted with him, and with one or two other gentlemen, for whose opinion I have a respect, and they all think with me, that I had better act as I have undoubtedly a right to do, and detain you as a prisoner, though assuredly a prisoner in no very strict sense of the word, rather than, by permitting you to go on in the course with which you have begun—glorious in a military point of view, as it may be—rather than see you, I say, make yourself remarkable by determined rebellion and opposition to the Royal authority, and thus exclude yourself for ever from the royal protection. There is my hand, Monsieur de Cerons. Believe me, I wish you well."

I took his hand respectfully, I may say affectionately, and I replied, "Your good opinion is, indeed, most deeply valuable to me, my lord; but yet, pardon me for detaining you to hear one word more. In your calculations for my benefit, there are things that you do not know. Are you aware, my lord, that the whole fortune

I possess on earth is my sword; that it is an absolute necessity for me to distinguish myself, and make myself a high name by military exertion? It is of course impossible for me to fight against those who maintain the same religious opinions as myself, and, consequently, the only field that is open to me in arms is in the Protestant cause."

"But the estate of Cerons?" said the Duke, inquiringly. "I remember it a very fair property in the hands of, I think, your father."

"Alas! sir," I replied, "the estate of Cerons has never been mine. My father, by the necessity of the times in which he lived, was obliged to part with the whole estate, except one rood of land, retained to preserve the name to his son. The rest was bought by his more fortunate cousin, the Baron de Blancford, with whom it still remains. Thus, therefore, my lord, if you keep me a prisoner, though your motives may be most kind ones, you cut me off from every opportunity of advancing my own fortunes and renown; and let me add, in one word, that I have the strongest of all possible motives for seeking to urge my way forward as fast as possible."

"What, love?" said the Duke of Montpensier, laying his hand upon my shoulder, and gazing in my face with a smile. "Nay, never conceal it. I can feel for you well, Monsieur de Cerons. But let me consider for a moment." And he fell into a fit of musing which lasted for several minutes.

"I had thought your circumstances were different," he continued; "but, however, it will only make this difference, that it will induce us to do at once what we intended always to do ultimately."

"To set me at liberty, I trust, my lord?" I replied.

"No," he said, with a smile, "no; the very reason you give is a stronger motive for keeping you. But Francis shall speak to you upon it all. You will make your first day's march with him to-morrow, and remem-

ber, I only exact one thing ere we part. When you are at Champigny, you are to make yourself as little known by name as possible, and to keep yourself as much concealed as you can. However, I will talk to D'Auvergne about it, and he shall tell you all. He sees me ten miles upon my way to-day, and then returns. Trust to what he tells you from me, as if they were my own words." And, thus saying, he left me, grateful indeed for having made such a friend, but still not a little grieved and melancholy at the prospect of remaining a prisoner, confined to the dull neighbourhood of Saumur, to which place I fancied the Duke was about to send me.

CHAPTER XVIII.

FROM the windows of the house where the Duke of Montpensier had taken up his quarters, I saw a large division of the army march out of Jarnac, and certainly a very different scene, indeed, was afforded by the gay and glittering procession of the royal host from that of the bands of the poor Huguenots, even in their freshest guise. Of the young Prince d'Auvergne I saw nothing during that day till supper-time, when, surrounded by his officers, he had only an opportunity of speaking to me a few words to prepare me for taking my departure from Jarnac, an hour after sunrise on the following day. Though there were one or two persons of higher rank sat nearer the Prince at supper than I did, and many with whom he was in old habits of intimacy, yet the little incident which had occurred during the retreat from Loudun, my condition as a prisoner, and the anxiety he had felt at different times on my account when my life was in danger, seemed to have established a deeper kind of interest between me and him than there existed between himself and any of his own party, and he always spoke to me with that tone of kindness, atten-

tion, and feeling which made any strangers who might happen to be at the table turn their eyes to see who it was that the Prince addressed in such a manner.

Somewhat before the time appointed on the following morning I descended from my chamber, prepared to set out. I found that the Prince* had gone to the quarters of the Duke of Anjou, and such of his attendants as were about to be sent from the army to Champigny, were waiting round the door with their horses and mine ready to take their place as the troops passed along. Determined to follow their example, I was waiting by the side of my horse, while the attendants of the Duke of Montpensier, and my own, kept respectfully at a little distance, when I felt some one suddenly pull my mantle, and turning round, a letter was suddenly put into my hands, and I saw one of the most beautiful girls I had ever beheld, whose features seemed not unfamiliar to me. The handwriting of the letter, however, was far better known, for it was that of Louise de Blancford, and, all eagerness, I was tearing open the seal, when the girl again plucked me by the cloak, and gazing up in my face, with her large dark eyes, cried, "Hist! seigneur, hist! Will you befriend us?"

She seemed about thirteen or fourteen years of age, not more; and after gazing upon her for a moment, endeavouring to recollect where I had seen her, I said, "How can I befriend you, my good girl? What is your name?"

"You recollect me not," replied the girl; "but my name is Miriam Ahar."

"Oh, I recollect thee well," I replied; "now tell me what I can do for thee, pretty one, and I will do it with pleasure." And as I spoke there was a look of real

* He was called the Prince Dauphin on account of his being the Dauphin of Auvergne; but we have given him the title of Prince only for fear of confusion. It has been attempted in these pages to display his character as it really was, while we give a few traits and anecdotes of his conduct in situations in which he was actually placed.

pleasure, I believe, came over my countenance which brought a smile upon the girl's beautiful lips.

"I was sure you would be kind," she said, "and you can help us thus: My father is here in yonder house with some rich merchandise. He is appointed to come after the army with the rear-guard, which sets out at four this evening; but he has learned from a good friend in this place, that six of the many men who do evil deeds in such armies as these, have their eyes upon him. Now you know what often happens to a Jew when he travels with the rear-guard of an army."

"No, I do not," I replied: "I never heard of any injury befalling them."

"Ay, who hears of such things befalling them but their own nation?" said she. "Who hears that the dead body of a Jew, murdered and stripped, is found by the road side? and all that are with him, what becomes of them? They fly if they are permitted, and some are killed to prevent them from bearing witness, and the rest are silent through fear, and the murderers go away enriched."

There was reason to believe that the girl's tale was too true; but it was difficult to know how to serve her.

"My poor child," I said, "what can be done for you? I am a prisoner, and wounded myself; but if you would point out what could be done, I would gladly do it, for I remember you were kind to me long ago."

"You can do much for us," she said. "We knew you were a prisoner, for we have been in the Protestant camp, and inquired for you. But still you can do much for us; for they say that you are loved by some of the great amongst these people, and we have only the protection of those who would devour us. Get us permission to go this very hour in the train of the main battle with which you go, and let one of your people accompany us; if so, we are safe; if not, we are altogether lost."

"I will do my best for you, Miriam," I replied. "Here comes the Prince d'Auvergne; I will apply to him. Stand by me; do not go back.—My lord," I said, "here is a petitioner to me. She and her father were kind to me long ago. They are Jews, but without their help I could never have appeared in the field at all. They are now appointed to go with the rear-guard; but you know what is likely to happen to a Jew, in a march, partly in the night, amongst the stragglers of the army."

"Let them follow us if they can get ready," replied the Prince, in evident haste; "one of your people can go with them, De Cerons."

"But give them some sort of safeguard, my lord," I said; "one word under your hand."

"Here, a pen and ink, Arnon!" said the Prince, in the same hasty tone; and tearing a leaf out of his tablet he wrote, "Suffer to pass"—"What is the name?"

"Solomon Ahar," I replied.

"Oh, Solomon Ahar, the usurious villain!" he said; "I have heard of him. Well, nevertheless—" and he went on writing—"Suffer to pass Solomon Ahar, his people and horses, with the baggage of Francis d'Auvergne."—"There," he said, "these vermin will do no great credit to my baggage, De Cerons: but if you wish it, so let it be:" and as he spoke he looked upon the exquisitely beautiful form and features of poor Miriam Ahar as if she had been a speckled toad. Such is prejudice!

"I will be back instantly, De Cerons," he continued, "and then we will join the regiment."

Thus saying, he turned into the court of the hotel, and I gave the paper to the girl, saying, "There, Miriam: that is all I can do for you. Andriot, you go with her, and take one of the grooms: I want only one with me. See them safe, and join me after the march." Miriam took the paper, and for her only reply kissed the hand that held it to her; and running away so fast that

Andriot—though very willing to accompany the pretty Jewess, it seemed—could scarcely mount his horse in time to follow her, she disappeared under the doorway of a house higher up the street.

In a moment or two after the Prince d'Auvergne made his appearance again, and, following him to the park of the château, where his regiment, and several others, were drawn up, I was soon plunged into all the bustle of a march with a large army. For some time orders and counter orders and arrangements of various kinds came so thick, that the Prince had no time for conversation with me; but, after the lapse of about an hour, everything fell into regular order again, and as there was no chance of any attack, he left the conduct of his regiment to the inferior officers, and civilly getting rid of several noblemen and gentlemen who seemed inclined to attach themselves to his person, he rode on with me, at once opening the conversation with the subject on which his father had spoken to me on the preceding night.

"My father," he said, "was so hurried yesterday that I did not clearly understand whether he had told you, De Cerons, what we intended to do, or not?"

I replied that the Duke had not done so, but had referred me to him; and I went on to say, "You know well, Monsieur d'Auvergne, that protracted imprisonment must be very painful to me, and I trust that it is your father's intention to admit me to ransom."

I was proceeding to repeat what I had said to his father the day before, when he interrupted me with a smile, saying, "You need not give me reasons why, De Cerons; though I look so young, I am old enough to have felt; and though I am older than you think me, I am not too old to have forgotten such feelings as I saw upon a certain parting between a lady and her lover. Your secret was well kept both by my father and myself, and your sour cousin of Blancford heard nothing of it from us. But with regard to setting you free I have

nothing to do; and I feel very sure that one of my father's reasons for sending you to Champigny is, that you may be near your fair lady, and not by a lengthened imprisonment lose the opportunity of advancing yourself in the favour either of herself or her father."

"Good God!" I exclaimed; "I had not the slightest idea that the Baron had gone to Saumur."

"Oh! you mistake, you mistake," said the Prince. "My father did not speak of sending you to Champigné-le-sec, which, as its name implies, would be a dry residence for you enough, but to Champigny, near Paris, where we have estates, and an old château of which we are all fond. But still I must say it is not in my power to affect at all my father's determination about your imprisonment. Indeed I must confess I think it best for you that it should be as it is; and, at all events, I have no authority in the matter. What I alluded to was something quite different. The day before yesterday, as we were riding down towards Cognac, my father and I were talking of you, and we determined, in memory of the day when you and I first met, to make you a present of a little farm that we lately bought for the purpose of giving it to an old friend of ours. He was unfortunately killed, however, in the first skirmish of this campaign. It lies close to our own place at Champigny, and is called by his name, which was the cause of our buying it for him. That name is Les Bois. It remains just as we had it all arranged, to give him. The old château, though but small, is, I think you will admit, as sweet a spot as well could be chosen to repose in after the toils of war. We have had it tapestried and furnished afresh throughout in the very last mode, and the annual rent amounts to about five thousand livres per annum."

"Oh, my lord, my lord, mention not such a thing to me," I cried. "Although your rank and mine might well permit me to accept your bounty, yet such a gift as that I am utterly undeserving of."

"Not at all, De Cerons, not at all," replied the

Prince. "You must recollect the circumstances under which it is offered. If, on the occasion of the retreat from Loudun, you had chosen to kill me, you might have done so; but you were too generous for that. You might equally have made me your prisoner; but the truth was you thought me a mere boy, and let me escape. I have no objection, De Cerons, to remain under obligations to you; and even in offering you this little gift, both my father and myself are still your debtors. You forget what would have been the ransom of the Prince d'Auvergne. I know well what it would be if Montluc had to fix it. Certainly not less than fifty thousand gold Henris, or a hundred thousand crowns of the sun. The estate we give, in all, cost but a third of that sum; and, therefore, my good friend, as the merchants would say, I still bear a great portion of my ransom to the credit of gratitude. The deeds of the estate my father has left with me to make over to you, and, if we can find a notary within ten miles of our halting-place, they shall be made your own this very night."

It may be easily conceived what were my feelings upon the present occasion. The tone in which he spoke, his whole manner and look, left no opportunity of refusing, even with courtesy, had I been so inclined. But when I looked upon his offer, and thought that this, which was given so generously, might be but the foundation of my future fortunes, I felt no inclination to refuse. I thought of Louise, too, my own bright Louise, and I felt the letter which she had sent me, and which I had placed in my bosom to read when alone, grow warm upon my heart when new hopes and expectations entered into it.

The eye of the Prince was upon me as I thus thought, and he seemed to read all the feelings that were passing in my bosom, for a smile came upon his countenance, and he said, "Come, De Cerons, you accept it. Prithee, not a word more. At Champigny you will have the

opportunity of visiting your new estate, or even of dwelling there if you so will, for the limits of the two properties touch, and of course you may reside at which you will. It is better, perhaps, however, that you should go to Champigny at first, where everything is prepared and ready for you; and, in the mean time, as it is somewhat dangerous just now for a Protestant to appear in the neighbourhood of Paris, you may take with all safety the name of Les Bois, as you have made that of De Cerons somewhat too well known."

Thus conversing we went on our way, and in the evening arrived at the camp under the walls of Angoulême. Persons were waiting for us at the quarters marked out for the Prince d'Auvergne, inviting us to sup with the Duke of Montpensier, and not a moment was allowed me to read the letter of Louise till I retired to rest for the night.

In the mean time, however, two circumstances happened which I must notice briefly. The first was the actual transfer of the château and property of Les Bois to myself, which was executed that night in the presence of a notary, both the Duke of Montpensier and the Prince signing the act. The next occurred as we were pausing round the table for a moment after supper. There was no one in the chamber but the Duke, his son, and myself, and we were about to separate, when an attendant announced that the Jew, Solomon Ahar, waited without. Probably each of the three thought that the business of the Jew was with himself; but the Duke said, "It is only that usurious Jew, who comes to tell me, I suppose, that the Duke of Anjou cannot have the money that he wants. In fact, I saw it would be so last night; and I suppose that the man is afraid of telling the Duke himself, lest he should lose his ears, so comes to put the unpleasant task on me. Send him in, however."

In a moment after poor Solomon Ahar entered, cringing and bending down to the ground.

"Well, Solomon," said the Duke, "you have come

sooner than I expected to see you; and I suppose this promptitude shows that you have no very good news to bring me."

"Not so, my most gracious lord," replied the Jew, bending again to the very ground. "On the contrary, I come to say, I think it can be done. I trust it can be managed. I have good hope that we can accept the terms of the noble Prince; for as I came along but now, I have had much talk and conversation with some of the gentle leaders, about arms, and spoil, and ransoms, and what not, and I have done a little commerce by the way, so that I think the matter can be done to the Prince's contentment; and I came to tell you first, monseigneur, because I thought it would do you a pleasure to tell his Highness yourself."

"On my life, it does!" cried the Duke, "for there is many a thing I want the Prince to do, which I dare not even ask, when he is in such a humour as at present."

"It is all owing, my very good and excellent lord," said the Jew, "it is all owing to these two noble gentlemen, my excellent good lord, your son, and that very respectable knight who sits by him; for had it not been for their protection, and my lord the Prince's permission to come with the main battle, I should never have seen these worthy traders, and done the little commerce that enables me to pleasure the Prince."

"It cannot be a little commerce, good Solomon," said the Duke, "which enables you to furnish a sum of two hundred thousand crowns, when you declared you could not find it in all Paris."

"On my life and soul!" cried the Israelite, "it will but pay the interest of the money, in case I be a loser."

But both the Duke and his son laughed, and Solomon himself grinned silently, as if he did not in the least degree expect to be believed. He produced from under his robe, however, two small packets, one containing the most exquisitely beautiful pair of gloves for a lady that I ever beheld, being formed of peach-coloured velvet,

embroidered on the back with gold and pearls, which he laid before the Prince d'Auvergne, begging his acceptance of them as a present for any lady that he loved. The other was a small plain dagger, about two hands' breadths in length, the haft of which was as plain as it well could be, being distinguished by nothing but a few lines of gold inlaid in the steel. The blade, which he drew from the plain steel sheath, was thick and dull in colour, as if it had once been rusty and ill-cleaned. Nevertheless, this somewhat coarse-looking implement he laid upon the table before the Duke with great reverence, saying, "Let me beg your noble acceptance of that which, though it looks but a poor gift, may be considered as invaluable. That dagger is made of one cake of pure Damascus steel. It will pass through the finest-tempered corselet that can be produced in the camp, even when struck by a weak arm; and with that dagger the Emperor Hassan, Caliph of the Moors, killed no less than ten Spanish cavaliers at the great battle of the Salado."

The Duke of Montpensier seemed to value the gift highly, and the Jew then turned towards me, bowing low, and saying, "I have not forgotten to be grateful to Monsieur de Cerons."

"The only gratitude I wish, good Solomon," I replied, "is, that you will find for me a certain dagger that you know of, and which I fear may be lost to me for ever, by the death of the person to whom you delivered it."

"I feared so, I feared so," said the Jew; "but it shall be found, if it be on this side of Constantinople. I have heard, good sir, that you are going towards Paris, so Monsieur Arnon, the Intendant of my good Seigneur d'Auvergne told me; and I would fain travel in such safe company, especially as I go on the business of his Highness of Anjou," he added, looking at the Duke.

"Be it so—be it so," said the Duke of Montpensier; "and the sooner you arrive in the capital the better."

"On the twenty-fifth day of the present month,"

said the Jew, "his Highness may draw on me bills of exchange through any of the merchants of Poitiers. They will not refuse him the money when they see the name of Solomon Ahar."

The Duke seemed not a little pleased with this intelligence, and, a few more words having passed, Solomon retired from the room, and the Duke hastened to communicate the news he had received to the Duke of Anjou.

In the meantime, the Prince d'Auvergne and I returned to our quarters, and bidding me, kindly, adieu, as I was to depart early on the following morning, he left me, as he thought, to repose. Sleep, however, was not destined to visit my eyes that night. It was with difficulty—my right hand and arm being still bound up in its wooden case—that I was able to open the letter of Louise; and oh, when I did open it, what pain did it inflict! The letter has been since destroyed, so that I cannot give it accurately; but it informed me that the Baroness had notified to her that her father had concluded upon a marriage between her and the Lord of Blaye. Her consent, she said, had never been asked, and the Baroness had immediately left her, stupified and thunderstruck. The only consolations she had, the poor girl said, were, in the first place, that the man himself was absent with the army, and likely to be absent long; and, in the second, that La Tour assured her the Baron himself had fixed that the marriage should not take place for some time. To give me some comfort in such circumstances, she said, "You know me, Henri; and know that I would rather die. But oh, that I could see you, and speak with you now, if it were but for a few hours!"

It may well be conceived that the time now appeared to lag: and when I, at length, set off upon my journey towards Champigny, every league seemed extended to two or three, every minute was protracted into days. I was the first in the saddle in the morning, the last

to feel fatigue at night. But still, as all the various military movements had disturbed the posts, and we rode our own horses, our journey was in reality slow, and seemed to me still slower.

There are but few events in that journey which I need dwell upon. The persons who went through it together were divided, by their particular circumstances, by their religion and their habits, into three parties, and each kept much apart from the other. I, belonging to the higher class of the land, was separated from the rest both by my rank and by my faith; and my servants, being Protestants, were, of course, not sought by the attendants of the Duke of Montpensier. The Intendant, indeed, of the Prince d'Auvergne, generally rode by my side, a step further back, endeavouring to beguile the way with different stories of the many scenes which he had witnessed in a long life, and the descriptions of objects which I had never beheld. He told a tale pleasantly enough, and his descriptions were vivid and accurate. I showed a sufficient degree of interest in what he said to flatter his vanity a little, and induce him to go on.

But he saw that I was deeply melancholy, and sometimes appeared to suppose that his conversation wearied me, and ceased it for an hour or two. Thus, then, some little communication took place between the Catholics and Protestants; but it was very different with the Jews, who formed the third division of our party. They were spoken to, indeed, by both the Catholics and Protestants, from time to time, and were treated with great kindness and with substantial courtesy, having every protection and assistance given to them whenever they needed it; but the servants, like their masters, looked upon them evidently as an inferior race, and kept up as little communication with them as possible. To insure that they were well treated, and had nothing to complain of,—for the Prince d'Auvergne had given me authority to regulate such matters on the march,—I generally made Solomon

and Miriam come and sit with me for an hour, after our day's journey was over, somewhat to the scandal, I believe, of good Master Arnon, the Intendant, who thought it strange that a French nobleman should permit a Jew to sit in his presence.

By this means took place an intimacy—if that can be so called which consisted almost altogether in tokens of respect and reverence on the one side, and protection on the other—between me and the Jew and his daughter. They clung to me as the only being that treated them with real kindness, and Miriam used to strive to amuse me with a thousand little engaging youthful ways: she would dance to me to the sound of her own singing, which was very sweet, though in a tongue that I did not understand; and she would play to me, at other times, either upon a small instrument, which she called a cithern, or upon a lute, with a skill and perfection that I had never heard before. She used to watch my looks, too, as if to see whether she amused me; but she seemed to me too young for idle thoughts to enter into the head of any one with regard to her; and I do not think I was of a character, even if she had been two or three years older, to fancy that she was in love with me, because she had a grateful regard for me.

The Jew himself, I believe, would have trusted her anywhere with me, as, by this time, he would have trusted me with any jewel of his store; and, one evening, when he himself had arrived at the inn, weary and somewhat unwell, he sent his daughter to amuse me, and to tell me that he himself had retired to rest. Well might he do so; and yet the conversation that we had together was as tender and as full of thrilling interest as it is possible to conceive. I had been musing sadly over my fate and that of Louise, and my eyes were buried in my hands when her entrance roused me, so that it was evident enough to her that she had just recalled me from a painful dream.

"You are sad, seigneur," she said, drawing a seat

close up beside me, and laying her small, clear, olive hand upon mine. "You are sad, and you do not tell Miriam what you are sad about."

"Oh, you would not care to hear, Miriam," I replied; "and could do me no good if you did hear."

"Oh, but I should care to hear," she said, "for I love you very much, seigneur. I loved you from the first moment I saw you, almost as much as—no, not so much as I love—him."

"Were you going to say your father, Miriam?" I asked.

"No," she said, "not him. I was going to say—as Martin Vern." And the girl coloured a little as she spoke; but added, immediately, "But he loves you, too, and told me how kind you had been to him when he was at the siege of Angoulême, and how you had given him your hand to help him up into the breach, and how you had carried him down in your arms when he was wounded, and saved his life, and been to him like a brother; which, for a lord and a soldier like you, he thought very kind indeed."

"You seem to have talked very much about me, Miriam," I said. "When was all this?"

"Oh, it was when we were last in Paris," replied the girl; "when we were staying at the house of Levi, my father's cousin, who has become a Christian, you know; and then I would go and see the lady that you had written to, which he told me about, and who had written to you again, and sent it to my father's house at Bordeaux, for the old merchant. So when the Baron de Blancford wanted the Persian silver brocade for his wife, I went with Martin Vern, that is, with the old merchant, and saw the young lady, too, and spoke with her in the cabinet behind the great saloon. I told her then, that if she would write you a letter, and send it to Levi's house, it should be conveyed to you; but I did not think then that I should carry it myself."

"And was it so the letter came to me?" I demanded.

"I had fancied, Miriam, that your father had got it when he was in the Protestant camp."

"Oh, no," she replied; "I carried it all the way in my bosom. And now I wish you would tell me why you are so sad, and why she looked so sad, too. Perhaps I could do more than you know."

"Oh, no, Miriam," I answered, you could do nothing, my good girl. That which makes me sad would need a more skilful surgeon than you are to cure."

She looked in my face for a moment as if to see whether I was speaking plainly or metaphorically, and she then cried, "Ay, now I understand you. You love her, and she loves you, and they will not give her to you in marriage."

"Ay, Miriam," I answered, with a sigh, as she came so near the truth,—"and they talk of giving her to another."

"To whom? to whom?" cried the girl, eagerly. "I heard something once which makes me suspect."

"Oh, no," I replied, "you know him not, Miriam. His name is the Seigneur de Blaye."

"I hate him!" cried the girl, bounding up from her seat, as if I had pronounced some talismanic word,—"I hate him! He dared to take hold of me when my father was gone to get him the money he wanted from the other room; and he asked me if I would go and live with him; and when I told him no, I would rather be waiting wench to a butcher's wife, he struck me on the face with his fingers, and called me by a name that I must not speak. I never told my father, or I believe he would have stabbed him; but I hate him, and I shall ever hate him. O seigneur!" she continued, turning towards me and clasping her hands together, "you have been very good and kind indeed to me and mine, and to all that I ever heard mention your name. It is such people as you that make us know what good people there can be; and I will try to show you that there can be gratitude in a poor Jewish girl. I told

my father, when he knew the people intended to murder him on the march from Jarnac, that if he would let me go and speak to you, you would be kind to him. He would not believe me for a long while; but he said that if you were, you would be the first Christian that ever looked upon a Jew as anything but a dog. My father, however, can be grateful, too, seigneur; and, though you may think that poor little Miriam has no power, yet in this business she may have more power than you know of."

Our conversation went on for some time; and the girl, young as she was, spoke with a depth of feeling, a tenderness, an experience of the world and the world's ways, which was very extraordinary, mingled as it was with a sort of eager and imaginative wildness of manner and language which, probably, she had acquired in the somewhat wandering and irregular life to which her father's pursuits subjected her. I looked upon the hopes and expectations that she tried to fill me with, of being able to do something in my behalf, as quite idle and vain; but still the gratitude that she showed was something pleasant to meet with, and I sent her away with thanks, and many a kindly speech in return.

At the village of Berny, a short distance from Paris, the Jew, his daughter, and the innumerable packhorses which followed him, were to part with their companions of the way, he proceeding to the capital, and we by a side road to Champigny. He now, however, considered himself quite safe; and when I had mounted my horse to depart, he came up to the side of my horse, followed by Miriam, and prayed a blessing from God upon my onward journey.

"I have heard from Monsieur Arnon," he said, in a low voice, "that the estate of Les Bois is yours, and that for the time I am only to call you Monsieur Les Bois; but whether you be at Champigny or at Les Bois, I hope you will not refuse to let me within your

gates; for you have shown me kindness such as I have seldom found, and such as I shall never forget."

Thus saying, he kissed my hand after his fashion, and Miriam coming up did the same. There was something in the poor people's gratitude that made my eyes glisten, though they were Jews, and bidding them adieu, I rode on. As I turned my horse into the road to the right, I looked back, and saw that they were standing before the inn-door gazing after me still.

CHAPTER XIX.

I WAS well pleased to arrive at Champigny, and certainly a very beautiful and charming spot it was; but of course the sight of Les Bois was still more agreeable to me as its proprietor. The château was a small house built in the antique fashion, but still in the most perfect repair; certainly very much less than the Duke's own mansion at Champigny, yet large enough for my ambition. It was seated on a hill in the midst of fine old woods, from which it derived its name; and there was an aspect of peace about it and calm ancient tranquillity which was pleasant to the eye and to the heart, after the scenes of anguish, care, and excitement which war had lately presented to my sight. The interior of the château was, as the Prince d'Auvergne had told me, well furnished, and newly furnished, throughout. To my eyes, indeed, it was splendid; for in those days there was, perhaps, even more than now, a marked difference in the grace, taste, and execution of everything in the neighbourhood of the capital, and in the remote provinces.

The good Intendant of the Prince d'Auvergne insisted upon taking me all over the château, and showing me every hole and corner, though I was most anxious, I confess, to go into Paris itself, and employ some

means for obtaining an interview with Louise. I did not know well how to explain my inclinations to my worthy companion, and to break the subject to him I made some inquiries regarding the capital; but the moment he heard that I had never seen Paris, nothing would serve him but that I must go there immediately. To his imagination it was the chief wonder of the world, and, after descanting upon its merits, beauties, and excellences for half an hour, he said, "If it were not presuming too far, my lord, I would propose to accompany you thither immediately, and show you some of the beauties of the place, though even to notice them all would require many weeks, I might say, months.

I instantly caught at this proposal, and, mounting fresh horses at Champigny, we rode on into the city, where, giving our horses to the boys, we proceeded to walk through the streets of the capital. At any other moment, when my mind was not so occupied by one predominant subject, everything that I saw would have been a matter of interest to me. The long ranges of shops covered over with awnings to keep the merchandise there exposed from the sun and the air, the people reading aloud pieces of poetry and satire at the corners of the streets, the different shows and exhibitions that attracted the sight at every step, — all would have amused, detained, and interested me; but now my great desire and object was to discover the abode of the Baron de Blancford, and obtain some means of communicating with her I loved. The multitude of houses, and streets, and people, that increased upon me at every minute, confused and puzzled me, and made me fancy the attempt almost impracticable, not knowing the address, and having no clue in such a labyrinth as that.

Suddenly, however, I called to mind that from Miriam's account Martin Vern was still in the custom of visiting the house of the Baron de Blancford; and judging that

he as a great merchant must be known to everybody, I asked Arnon the Intendant if he could lead me to his dwelling.

"I do not know him," said the Intendant. "Is he a Huguenot?"

"No," I replied, with a smile at the expression of horror that came over the man's countenance on the very idea of visiting a Huguenot in Paris. "No, Monsieur Arnon, he is a Catholic, and a great merchant, who has money of mine in his hands."

"Oh, then the case is very different," replied Arnon. "We will inquire after him immediately." And entering a large goldsmith's house by the door close to the shop, he asked for Martin Vern, the merchant.

We had now no difficulty in finding the dwelling, which was up a flight of steps, the goods not being exposed in the streets as amongst the ordinary shopkeepers, but spread out in rooms within doors. Neither good Martin Vern, however, nor his son was to be found at home, and I left a message under the name of Les Bois asking to see one or both of them at the château of Champigny.

Although by this time the days had lengthened, and we were in the height of summer, it was now time that we should turn our steps homeward, as the distance we had to go was nearly four leagues, and during the whole of the following day I waited in anxious expectation for the appearance of one of the two merchants. No one came, however, and another and another day succeeded, during which I scarcely stirred out, and left directions for finding me whenever I did so. At the end of the third day my patience became quite exhausted, and on the following morning I begged Arnon to send off one of the Prince's servants who knew the capital well, to ask why Master Martin Vern had not been to Champigny. Arnon did as I directed immediately; and, on bearing me the answer, which was that neither Martin Vern nor his nephew had yet returned from Blois, where they

had gone to attend upon the King, he added, in order to set my mind at rest upon the subject which he thought troubled me, that I might make myself quite easy about the money; for that, having made inquiries, he found the house of Martin Vern was one of the most wealthy and respectable in Paris.

I could not help exclaiming, "Pshaw! it is not the money, my good friend." And it was evident from that moment that Arnon's curiosity was not a little excited to find out what it could be that I sought with the merchants, if it were not the money that they owed me. My determination, however, was now taken to seek the house of the Baron de Blancford myself; but not all my efforts could discover it, and it was equally in vain that I attempted to find the abode of Solomon Ahar. That he was going to lodge at the house of his cousin Levi, I knew; but this cousin Levi was not to be discovered, and on making inquiries concerning him, I was always met by a demand of "Levi who?" there being a thousand persons in Paris of the name of Levi, but all with some surname attached.

In the meantime, the news that daily came in from the scene of war, was anything but such as to give me gratification. The feeble attack on Poitiers by the Protestants; the gallant defence of the young Duke of Guise; the siege of St. Jean d'Angely; the death of poor Martigue, whom I could not help regretting; the fatal battle of Moncontour, which—although the defeat of the Protestants was as complete, and the success of the Catholics as surprising, as well need be—was magnified in Paris in a very great degree; all these things grieved and pained me, while week after week went by in fruitless inquiries; and, at length, with a sort of scorn of myself—which is a true part of misanthropy—for giving a moment's credit to the Jew's professions of gratitude, I sat me down, in bitterness of spirit, and tried to fancy that I hated the whole human race.

The autumn of the year was now approaching; there

could be little or no doubt that, during the ensuing winter, the young Lord of Blaye would be free to return to Paris, and pursue the project of marriage which was held out to him; and the thoughts of poor Louise, and the vexations to which she would be subjected, tormented me like an army of fiends, and reinforced themselves by every power of imagination.

The news that St. Jean d'Angely had been recaptured by the Protestants, and that the Prince d'Auvergne, who had held it out for some time against them, had been forced to capitulate for want of supplies, had reached us some days, when, as I was sitting one night in the cabinet at Champigny, I heard the clattering of horses' feet in the court-yard below; and, in a moment after, to my great astonishment, the Prince himself entered the room. He embraced me kindly; and after a few minutes' conversation upon general things, remarked that I neither looked well nor happy.

"Come," he said, "De Cerons, tell me what is the cause of this. I think by this time you may fully confide in your friend."

Before I could answer, one of his officers had entered for some directions; and while he gave them, I made up my mind to unbosom my whole thoughts to him. In the course of the evening I accordingly did so; and as was much the character, both of his father and himself, he heard me out with scarcely any observation or reply.

When I had completely done, however, and he had a complete view of my past life and present situation, he said, "There are a good many strange parts in your tale, De Cerons; but neither you nor I, I fancy, know so much of the laws as to be sure whether these acts of your father and your cousin were legal. However, I see it is not that which pains you now. It is the matter of your fair cousin, and I grieve to say that any news I may have for you is not calculated to soothe you. No wonder that you have not found them in Paris, for they are all still at Blois with the Court, which gladly keeps

your cousin from joining the Admiral and the Prince de Bearn. I saw them all there at a grand fête given by the King, and talked for some time with Mademoiselle de Blancford. I talked of you, De Cerons, so you may suppose that she heard me willingly; and, indeed, it was impossible to mistake her looks, ay, or even her words, when you were mentioned. If Monsieur de Blaye were to marry her, he would certainly wed a woman, knowing that she loved another man. However, when the Baron came up, too, I mentioned you to him, also, and somewhat startled him, I believe, by calling you my dear and most intimate friend. But he did not look displeased, De Cerons, nor do I think that he bears any ill-will towards you in his heart, though he be wayward and moody, and entirely ruled by that worst of all women, his present wife."

"Was Monsieur de Blaye there?" I demanded, somewhat sharply.

"He was," replied the Prince; "and giving himself out rather more decidedly than Monsieur de Blancford seemed to like, I thought, as the promised husband of your Louise."

I started up with an exclamation and a threat that I am now ashamed of.

"Hush, hush," cried the Prince, with a reproving smile: "do not give way, my good friend. By this conduct, he is doing himself more harm than good, with the Baron at least, for I heard him questioned upon the subject; and, turning upon his heel with a sort of sneer, he replied, 'Monsieur de Blaye is somewhat sanguine in his nature.' However, I did not forget you, De Cerons, and I told the whole story to my father, who, of course, is more competent to act than I am. I do not very well know what my father did; but I see the result, which is, that Monsieur de Blaye has received a high appointment which he solicited more than a year ago, namely, to go with our military embassy to the Court of the Sultan. This was done, I am sure, for the purpose of

removing him for a time from the scene, and of allowing you to have a fair opportunity—"

"But how, my dear Prince," I said, "can I have a fair opportunity when I am held a prisoner here, unable to advance myself, or signalize my name?"

"You shall hear, De Cerons, you shall hear," replied the Prince. "My father was not a man to forget any point under such circumstances. He empowered me to offer you your liberty freely and without ransom, upon one condition, that you should go to join the Prince of Orange or Prince Ludovic, who are now waging war in the Low Countries, my father undertaking to obtain for you a high command in their army. You would thus be enabled to distinguish yourself in a Protestant cause without bearing arms against your native country. You would not be farther from Mademoiselle de Blancford, nor even so far, as in carrying on this fatal contest in Guyenne or Poitou; you would be serving the King rather than opposing him, for it is his wish to give some support to the Prince of Orange; and my father only requires you to remain in the Low Countries till a peace is established in the internal affairs of France, which, we trust, will soon be the case; he, at the same time, promising to you that you shall have permission to return to France, freed from all restriction, the moment that it is ascertained that Monsieur de Blaye is about to return from the East."

"Your father, my lord," I said, "is most noble, generous, and considerate; and, foreseeing everything that I could desire or wish, of course, not only prevents the possibility of my refusing such an offer, but binds me to him by gratitude for ever."

"I told him that such would be the case," replied the Prince; "but, alas! De Cerons, an unexpected event is likely to obstruct all our proceedings. The embassy was to set off in ten days, and every thing was arranged. Monsieur de Blaye, though looking very much mortified when he heard his appointment, of course *could not refuse it*; and I proposed to stay another

week at Blois, and then come to you and confer with you regarding the whole affair, when, suddenly, one evening, as I was returning home, I met with three women in the street, the principal of whom,—for the other two were evidently servants—asked to speak with me without taking off her mask. I had a number of people about me, but it was close to the door of the hotel; and, bringing her into the porter's chamber, I asked her to explain what it was she wanted. As soon as we were alone, she took off the mask and showed me the face of the Jewish girl, Solomon Ahar's daughter, whom I found talking with you one day at Jarnac. She told me at the same time that she came to speak to me about you, and seemed to know your whole history, and every secret of your heart. But to the facts that she told me: they were these, that Monsieur de Blaye had gone straight to the King, and had asked and obtained leave to remain six weeks in Paris before he set out, for the express purpose of concluding his marriage before he went. The Baron, the girl said, had not given his absolute consent, but made it dependent upon his daughter's inclination; but the Baroness had positively promised that the Baron and herself would at least sign the contract of marriage, even if their daughter, as she said, preferred waiting till the return of Monsieur de Blaye. Should they sign it," D'Auvergne continued, "you may consider your Louise as lost to you for ever; for her father puts it out of his own power to dispose of her hand, or withdraw his consent. The Jewess was really agitated about the whole business; and she made some wild exclamations, declaring that she would stop it, if I could get permission for her father and some persons who have been trading in partnership with him, to quit the Court, where they have been detained for several weeks in regard to negotiations now going on for loans of money. This was easily done, as the thing was nearly concluded; and, as soon as I had seen this arranged, I came away hither, with my father's consent, to consult with you in regard to what can be done."

"You are most kind," I said. "How can I ever thank you, D'Auvergne? but, alas! I fear that I am doomed to misery and to despair."

"Not so, not quite so," replied the Prince. "As I came hither from Blois, I considered the matter maturely; and we have to recollect that you, as a near relation of the lady, have every right to oppose the signature of the contract, if you think fit so to do. In the first place, you must make perfectly sure that she herself is brought to yield by no means of persuasion or intimidation that can be used towards her, and, at the same time, things must be suffered to take their course till the contract is on the very eve of being signed by the Baron. You must then, by some form of law, which I can inquire into, give him formal intimation of your opposition, which will consequently be brought before the courts. The fact is, you are fighting for delay; for your opposition against her own father cannot of course be successful, and you may, perhaps, be fined in some small sum for having made it; but long before that time this young libertine, for such he is, must be in Constantinople, and the matter secure."

I mused for a moment in thought, the intensity of which approached to agony; I saw before me the blasting of all my best hopes, and I felt at that moment more than I ever had yet done, not only how deeply, how truly, how ardently I loved my poor Louise, but how completely and thoroughly, without my knowing it, her image had been mingled with all my dreams and aspirations,—how intimately the thought of winning her had mingled with all the motives for energy, exertion, and endeavour. I felt at that moment that to lose her, was to lose my whole hold of life—my whole inducement to struggle onward in the course I was pursuing. There was no scheme so wild, so improbable, so daring, that I would not have undertaken it at that moment to frustrate machinations that could but tend to her misery and my own: there was no step so dangerous to myself,

even had it been planted on the crumbling edge of an open grave, that I would not have taken to make her mine. Yet, as I mused, I could not help thinking,—I may say I could not help being convinced,—that the scheme of the Prince d'Auvergne was likely to be frustrated by some impetuous act of the Baron de Blancford.

"With many men," I said, "the whole might succeed admirably; but I, who know his determined and passionate character well, feel perfectly certain, that, if there be a way of frustrating us, he will find it."

"I see none," replied the Prince Dauphin, "if we can by any means insure that the signing of the contract is put off to the last moment. However, De Cerons, the whole party are coming to Paris immediately; the Jew, and the merchants who are with him, will most probably arrive to-morrow morning, and your cousin with his train on the morning after. Obstacles of various kinds, I am sure, will keep this Monsieur de Blaye for a day or two behind them; and let us do the best we can in the mean while. At all events, we shall gain some intelligence; and what I should propose is, to ride out the day after to-morrow on the road to meet them, and bringing them to your château of Les Bois, give the Baron a little entertainment and repose ere he goes into Paris."

I smiled at the thought, saying, "I much fear, my excellent friend, that you will find the Baron would neither accept the invitation, nor thank the giver."

"Pshaw! De Cerons," replied the Prince; "you are older than I am in years, but younger a great deal in experience of the world. The Baron undervalued and undervalues you simply, because he thought and thinks you poor. He thought you the creature of his bounty; he will now come here and find you the creature of your own sword, renowned in arms, independent in fortune, and seeking no aid from him or any man. His view will be quite different now, depend upon it. As for the

arrangements of your little régale, leave that all to me: you, on your part, cast off the rough and somewhat negligent apparel in which your despondency has brought you to remain, trim your beard, bring forth your best brocade, and look as gay and gallant as if you were going into the tiltyard."

It is needless to pause upon all the minute incidents which took place at this time. Martin Vern and his nephew had scarcely arrived in Paris, before they were at Champigny, bringing with them Miriam, who seemed to have her own will with all of them. Not knowing that the Prince was there, I found that his high rank and connexion with the royal blood of France, somewhat abashed and confounded the two merchants. He, on his part, did not so much unbend as, perhaps, I had expected; but he treated them kindly and without haughtiness, though with dignity: but he soon left them alone with me; and a few words showed me that both the elder and the younger Martin Vern—what between all they had observed of the conduct of myself and Louise, and the information of the young Jewess—were perfectly aware of how we stood towards each other, and took a kindly interest in my fate. Miriam, for her part, seemed to me to have gone quite mad. She said it was just what she had wished, all that she could wish, that had happened and would happen; and seemed quite as happy and elevated, as I was grieved and depressed. Her conduct somewhat annoyed me; and, after some short conversation about the money, which I still determined to leave in the hands of Martin Vern, I saw them depart without any effort to detain them.

On the following morning, with a splendid train, comprising at least twenty persons, dressed, as far at least as the Prince himself was concerned, in the height of the then existing fashion, D'Auvergne and myself set out upon the road towards Blois; and after riding for some eight miles on a fine autumnal morning, we came within sight of a large party advancing slowly, which

proved, as we expected, to be that of the Baron de Blancford.

Putting spurs to our horses' sides, we rode up at a quick pace; and the Baron thought fit, in those dangerous times, to halt his troop upon seeing such a body of horsemen coming down upon him. His surprise when he beheld me and the Prince Dauphin, however, I shall not easily forget: nor need I say much more of this interview, as far as it regarded him, than that I readily perceived that the Prince's view of the Baron's character was correct; and that I had grown wonderfully in his opinion since I had ceased to need his assistance. The fête at Les Bois was accepted at once; but it required some private persuasion on the part of the Prince Dauphin, to make him believe that I was really the lord of the estate to which he was now conducted. The Baroness, on her part, gazed at me with some surprise; and throughout the day, I forced myself to show her as much civility and attention as possible: but there were some others in that group, where there were deeper interests at work. Louise met me with eyes full of deep and intense affection; and with a manner from which the sudden surprise seemed to have taken all confidence, but not all tenderness; while her two brothers, whom I had not seen for a long time, clung round me as if their affections had found no object since we parted.

In the course of the day I had an opportunity of speaking more than once with Louise alone; and, in a few brief words, I gave her an account of all that was taking place, regarding our plans and purposes. Her only reply was by words of affection that can never pass from my heart; and by the solemn assurance, that no power on earth should ever make her consent to become the wife of the Seigneur de Blaye. The day went over, in short, as brightly as it was possible under such circumstances; and during the three weeks that followed, everything seemed to combine to favour the plan which the Prince had laid down for me.

It fortunately occurred that I never met with the Seigneur de Blaye during the whole of that period. Such a meeting could but have been followed by one result, and that result must have been fatal to myself,—for it must be remembered that I was a Protestant, and he was a Catholic; and the survivor in a duel, under such circumstances, could only expect death. My visits to the hotel of Monsieur de Blancford were generally short; for I soon saw that, if I did not find Louise when first I went, means were taken to prevent her appearing while I was there. The Baron, however, was all condescension, and declared that he was proud of his cousin. The Baroness, on her part, seemed to me to make herself somewhat more tender and amiable than was needful.

But at length the fatal minute, which was to dissipate such a state of things altogether, arrived; and just on the day preceding that which was fixed ultimately as the last for Monsieur de Blaye's stay in France, a messenger from the Baron invited me in courteous terms, to come and witness his signature of the contract of marriage between my cousin, Louise, and the Seigneur de Blaye. We had already ordered a notary to prepare in due form my opposition to the Baron's signature, upon the plea both of relationship, and never having been consulted; and of having a prior claim to the hand of Mademoiselle de Blancford. The note requested the honour of the Prince Dauphin's company on the same occasion, as my friend; and, on reading it, he exclaimed, "Oh, certainly, certainly! I will go, De Cerons; and not only that, but we will take a sufficient body of retainers with us to guard against all chances; and we will have likewise our own notary, to take act of your opposition.

All this being settled, we set out and reached the house at the hour appointed. I was somewhat surprised to find, going up the stairs, good Martin Vern, accompanied by a boy carrying several packages, and

another man not so burdened. On entering the great saloon, we found the Baron with Monsieur de Blaye, the Baroness, and some of her kindred, both male and female; besides whom, the room contained Louise, with the tears already in her eyes, and several notaries and lawyers. Immediately on our entrance, Monsieur de Blaye came forward with his hand extended towards me, as if imagining that we were the best possible friends; but I drew myself up and bowed stiffly, and he fell back with a heavy frown.

The Baron looked somewhat surprised; but the presence of the Prince d'Auvergne acted as a restraint upon him, and he welcomed his distinguished guest with courtesy, if not with so free and unrestrained a demeanour as usual. He looked two or three times suspiciously at the notary who accompanied us, and who, as one of the most distinguished of his class, received far more attention and marks of reverence from his brethren, than either D'Auvergne or I wished or expected. Sweetmeats and some choice wines, however, were handed round before the destined explanation began; but at length the Baron, prefacing the matter by a little eulogy upon Monsieur de Blaye, which had well nigh made some of those who knew him laugh, directed the contract to be read.

That document began by setting forth that, "as an alliance was intended at a future period, between the Seigneur de Blaye and Mademoiselle de Blancford, it had been judged expedient that the Baron de Blancford should sign the contract to that effect, previous to the departure of the said seigneur for foreign lands; and therefore," &c. It went on to express the usual agreements in such cases, but took care to omit the express consent of the bride; and also made no provision for the freedom of her religion. She was declared heiress of the lands of Blancford and Cerons, in the event of her two brothers' death without children; and the Baron promised with her a dowry, which to me, who knew his

habits of expense, and in some degree the true nature of his property, seemed enormous.

As soon as the whole was read, he took the pen to sign the contract; and I could see my poor Louise clasp her two hands together, and raise her eyes to me, with a look of anguish and supplication.

At that moment, the notary we had brought, who had hitherto been consulting with the others, stepped forward, and laid his hand upon the spot where the Baron was about to sign, saying,

"Your pardon, Monsieur le Baron de Blancford; I think that Monsieur de Cerons has something to say in this matter, and a short paper to read, to which I beg your attention; and of which, gentlemen, you will all bear witness."

He then handed me the paper, saying at the same time in a whisper, "Neither more nor less."

I followed his directions to the letter, and read the paper of objections through, without pause. When I came to the end, however, and found there stated that I would sustain my right upon the grounds mentioned, and upon several other legal grounds of objection, to all and sundry parts and clauses of the said contract, in warranty of which I produced as my surety the Prince Dauphin d'Auvergne, I laid, I know not well why, considerable emphasis upon the words "several other legal grounds of objection."

At the same time I remarked the Baron turn very pale; but he recovered himself immediately, and with an angry gesture exclaimed to the notary, who had continued to hold his hand on the paper, "Remove your hand, Maître Jean! I will sign it at all risks."

"It is useless, Monsieur le Baron," replied one of the other lawyers; "after this solemn protest in due and legal form, no act that you can do in this matter is lawful until the parliament shall have considered the matter to render justice therein."

"But *I* shall take care to render justice to myself,"

exclaimed Monsieur de Blaye, advancing towards me furiously: "we all know that you lawyers love to see things plunged into the quagmire of the courts, round the edges of which you toads sit and croak at leisure; but gentlemen have a shorter means of settling such transactions, and to such, Monsieur de Cerons, do I appeal. Nor, sir, must there be delay of any kind. To-morrow I depart from Paris: the rest of this day is our own."

"Oh! no, no!" cried the voice of Louise, while, with her arms extended towards me as if for protection, she ran forward.

But ere she reached me, she fell fainting on the ground, and the Baroness with other ladies present, prevented my approach. All was now a scene of confusion; the gentlemen of the party came forward—each talking, each offering his opinion—towards the spot where De Blaye and myself stood face to face, and the Baron seemed divided between us and his daughter, for whom I saw that he was not without feeling, though he struggled not to show it.

In the midst of this Babel, however, the clear fine-toned voice of the Prince Dauphin suddenly made itself heard, saying,

"Your pardon, gentlemen, your pardon! I have one word to say; but that one word is an important one, which must settle all this matter between my excellent good acquaintance, Monsieur de Blaye, and my *friend*, Monsieur de Cerons."

All were instantly silent, except De Blaye himself, who repeated more than once, in a tone of authority, a command to keep silence, and let the Prince speak. When he stopped and bowed, D'Auvergne went on, "What I have to say, De Cerons, is, that you will be good enough to remember you are my father's prisoner, and, therefore, can lie under a challenge from no man.*

* Such was the law of arms.

Monsieur de Blaye, I must call upon you to retract your challenge, as no man of honour can offer one to a gentleman incapable of accepting it."

De Blaye, who was both really enraged and really brave, blustered a good deal at this notification, and said something rather offensive to the Prince about his father, the Duke, being afraid of losing my ransom. D'Auvergne answered coolly, however, saying, "That is not his fear or mine, Monsieur de Blaye; but our apprehension might well be lest the Catholic army might lose a very tolerable soldier and brave young gentleman in yourself; because, as we all well know, Monsieur de Cerons would kill you like a rat. Come, de Cerons, I must beg you to accompany me."

If the first part of the Prince's speech had pleased Monsieur de Blaye, and made him simper and look modest, the unpleasant simile in the latter part caused him to swell and colour with anger. But D'Auvergne took no further notice; the fact of my not being at liberty was without reply; and, after one look to my poor Louise, I quitted the room. Martin Vern was at the door, and to him the Prince whispered a word as we passed. The merchant made a lowly inclination of the head, and, mounting our horses, we rode away.

CHAPTER XX.

I HAD remarked particularly, in the painful interview just past, that neither good old La Tour, nor the two dear boys, who were daily growing up more and more like their angel mother, had been present; but I learned afterwards that many painful efforts had been previously made to induce Louise to wed a man she abhorred, and that her brothers had broken forth with somewhat rash expressions of indignation, while La Tour had remon-

strated in milder but as forcible terms. The consequence had been that the Baron had sent them all three to a distance; and probably was not a little glad, when the scene terminated as it did, that he had taken that precaution. I received from him that night a threatening note; but it was so worded as evidently to court a lengthened reply; and, after pondering over it for some moments, I showed it to the Prince, who came in at the time. He read it attentively; but, wise beyond his years, he returned it, saying,

"Keep that note, De Cerons; and if you will take my advice, reply but vaguely, and still as shortly as possible."

I did take his advice, and to all the haughty demands of how I dared to offer opposition to his disposal of his own child, and his own property, I replied merely that I had acted as I doubted not would be found just in a court of law; but, at the same time, I added—as it was my first wish not to irritate the father of her I sought to obtain—all that was kind and deferential towards himself.

D'Auvergne approved highly of my note; but as he gave it back to me, he placed his hand kindly upon my arm, and said, "And now, De Cerons, remember our compact. You must, after all this business, go immediately into the Low Countries, upon the conditions I stated. For your own safety I say you must, for your stay in Paris as a known and marked Huguenot will be most dangerous: but you must also do so for our sake. My father, as well as myself, wishes you every success in your suit; but remember, we must not be found taking any undue advantage either of De Blaye or Monsieur de Blancford; all that we wish is to give you a fair chance, and as soon as we have the positive assurance that the former is fairly gone from Paris, you must go and win honours and renown with the bright hope of obtaining her you love."

I felt myself bound in honour to follow his injunctions

to the letter, and only required one day to prepare, and to ascertain that the Seigneur de Blaye had actually departed. Much business, however, remained to be done in the meantime. I had to write to the Admiral de Coligny, giving him information of the conditions that were imposed upon me, and begging him to transmit whatever money of mine remained in his hands, when convenience served, to good Martin Vern. I had to write to Moric Endem, giving him, as far as it was needful, orders to command my troop in the service of the Protestant Princes, and I had to buy all those necessary equipments for my journey and for active service, few of which I now possessed. The attendants that I had brought with me were all I could expect to obtain, as few in Paris were willing to own themselves of the poor and persecuted sect.

On the following morning, early, then, I rode into Paris, and went straight to the house of Martin Vern; but there I was directed to seek him at the dwelling of Levi Judi, the great goldsmith. When I reached the house, I found a number of persons whom I knew collected together, and talking earnestly, in a small dark room. There were the two christian merchants, Solomon Ahar, and his daughter, Miriam; but, besides these, was Levi himself, the converted Jew, who was speaking when I came in, and suddenly stopped. They were all evidently rejoicing over some event, which I afterwards found was the success of my opposition to the young Lord of Blaye; and I now learned that he had been obliged to depart by daybreak that morning, letters of reproof having been sent from Blois for having already lingered too long.

I thought Miriam's satisfaction would have exceeded all bounds; and a slight degree of discomfort which I remarked in the demeanour of the younger Martin Vern at the sight of her evident regard for me, first gave me a suspicion of matters which were going on in their hearts, perhaps as yet unknown to either.

After some conversation upon the chief topic of all my thoughts, I took the good merchant aside; and, telling him the destiny that awaited me, I begged him to procure, as reasonably as possible, all I stood in need of before night. I also told him, that, with the exception of what my equipment might cost, I should leave all I had in his hands, having plenty by me for my journey; and I then besought him, if he obtained any speech with my sweet Louise alone, to tell her that I loved her ever, and would never cease to seek her hand so long as I had life.

He mused for some time over what I said, committed all my orders to a note-book, and then said, in his calm and business-like tone, "I will do all this as far as possible, seigneur, and will be at Champigny with you to-night; but I have a request to make which you may think a strange one for a poor merchant like myself. It is, that if ever you be placed in difficulties again, regarding this transaction between your noble cousin, the Baron, and Monsieur de Blaye, you would give some of us instant and full intelligence; for, though we be merely citizens we have some say in many families; and perhaps, had not your opposition of yesterday morning been successful, Martin Vern might not have been upon the stairs for nothing."

I pressed him much to explain what he meant, but he would not; and, promising in return for the interest he showed in me to place the confidence he required in him, I left him and went back to Champigny. I found the Prince Dauphin busily writing when I arrived, with several other letters before him sealed with various different seals. When he had ended those that he himself was employed upon, he gave them all to me.

"These, De Cerons," he said, "are letters from my father, and from some of the ministers of the King, to different princes and nobles in the Low Countries and on the Rhenish frontier of Germany; two amongst them being to the Prince of Orange. They will, beyond all

doubt, procure you every opportunity, and you will do the rest to raise yourself still higher than you yet have done. This, which I have written, is to the Count de Bergh, to whom I once did some kindness; and this, in case of extreme need, is to the Duke of Alva. I mean by extreme need, that you should use it in case your life is in danger from some of Alva's proceedings. He is a nobleman of a high heart and gallant character; but the streams of Toledo which harden steel to such a temper, have not left his heart altogether untouched by their influence. At the sight of this, however, he will free you, as he is bound to do; and now, De Cerons, if I can at any future time serve, aid, or befriend you, call upon me instantly as you would upon a brother; and depend upon it that I will give you information, even should you be at the other end of the earth, the moment there is a whisper of your rival's return."

I thanked him, as may be supposed, and the conversation that thus commenced went on to touch upon a thousand things, in regard to all of which his kindness of heart and soundness of judgment made me but admire and love him more and more.

At night, nearly at ten o'clock, Martin Vern himself arrived with horses loaded with all that I required, but there was one small note amongst the rest of the things delivered to me, far more valuable to me than anything else that he brought with him. It was from Louise, and very short; but oh how sweet it was to me to read!

"Dear, dear Henri! a thousand thanks, a thousand blessings on your head for saving me from distraction. I am better now,—I am well now. They know your love for me,—they now know mine for you, and they will find neither fail I am sure. The worst is over. They cannot shake me. I am yours for ever.

"LOUISE."

The account given me by Martin Vern was even more cheering than the letter of Louise herself; he had seen her, he said, and spoken with her long in her chamber. During the whole of the preceding day she had been so ill that the Baron had become alarmed and grieved, and, in order to make some atonement, had sent for jewels and rich clothes as gifts to his daughter. It showed how little he knew her nature. With Louise, one kind word would have been worth all the jewels upon earth.

After speaking of her for some time, the good merchant turned to other matters, and not only gave me the long-delayed acknowledgment of the sums of mine he had in hand, but pointed out means by which I might be enabled to obtain money, should I need it, in any of the great towns which I was likely to visit. My equipment was now complete, and on the following morning at daybreak I began my journey, proposing in the first place to seek the Prince of Orange. The kindness of the Prince Dauphin showed itself to the last moment, and he was up and out to see me depart, embracing me ere I mounted my horse as if he had been my brother.

I found the Prince of Orange labouring hard to gather a sufficient army on the German side of the Rhine, to support the insurgent Protestants of the Low Countries; and as he himself, and his brother, Count Ludovic, had been much with our own troops in France, my name was not unknown to him. He received me kindly and gladly; but there was about him a sort of cold and suspicious reserve, which, doubtless, was very needful, but which had a tendency to check attachment in the outset; and, had it not been for his great wisdom, skill, courage, and determination, which were already well known, one would have been inclined to say that he was less calculated than almost any other man on earth to sustain the character of a popular leader.

The great difference, however, which exists between

the mere capricious outbreak of popular discontent, and the determined resistance to insufferable oppression, is shown in nothing more strongly than in the choice of leaders. The fiery, impetuous, loud-tongued demagogue does well enough for the one, but the calm, cool, powerful-minded statesman must be sought for the other.

The Prince of Orange gave me authority and command, but it was long ere he trusted me; and I could often see, that, in conversing with me upon any indifferent subject, he watched every word that fell from me, every look, every gesture; but it was the same with others; and till he was perfectly satisfied with his own knowledge of the man, he never trusted at all; nor even when he was did he trust entirely.

The first proof of the degree of confidence that he at length placed in me, was rather diplomatic than military. His movements had been retarded by a thousand adverse circumstances, and he sent me on into Holland to communicate with Sonnoy, and to do as much as possible to keep up the spirits of the Dutch malcontents. From Holland I had to make a tour through Utrecht, Guelderland, and Friesland, and was, on the whole, far more successful than I had expected. On my return to the Prince I found him well pleased with what I had done, and on making my report of some of my proceedings I saw a quiet smile curl his lip, which made me stop suddenly.

"You wish to know why I smile, De Cerons," he said: "it is because you have done exactly what I expected, and what no hackneyed diplomatist would have done. I have often remarked that in rapid negotiations a man of strong natural sense but little experienced in intrigue, puts to fault a whole host of old politicians. If they had time to discover his true character, the result would be lost; but as it is, they attribute to experience that which is merely the result of good sense, and puzzle themselves to discover motives, overstepping the

true ones that he lays before them. However, De Cerons," he continued, "I have good news for you—news which, as a Protestant and a Frenchman, you will be glad to hear. Peace is concluded in France; and the secret assurances of support from King Charles which you brought me, and which I did not trust, are thus confirmed."

He then went on to give me a full account of all the events which had taken place in France since I left him; events which had reached me only in rumours during my journey.

We were all deceived by the fair aspect of events. The military preparations of the Protestants of the Low Countries went on rapidly; town after town revolted against the tyranny of Alva. Where leaders and assistance were wanted, the Prince of Orange despatched them with all speed from his camp, and my military life again began.

On it, however, I need not dwell; the general events of the times are written in general histories, and my own individual career offered nothing but the usual occurrences in the life of a soldier who, not naturally timid, has every motive to daring exertion. I was not less active or less brave than others, and there was no one more fortunate than myself. Honours, rewards, and recompenses flowed in upon me rapidly; the news that I daily received from France was most joyful: the Protestants were not only treated with gentleness, but with especial favour: the Admiral ruled the Court of France, and a regular French army was promised to co-operate with the Prince of Orange. So far, indeed, was this proceeding carried, that by one and the same courier I received news that Count Ludovic had been sent to maintain a correspondence with the Protestants of Flanders, tidings that he had captured Mons, and a commission for myself under the hand of the King of France, to raise a regiment of Protestant soldiery for the service of the Flemish insurgents.

It was now full spring in the year 1672, and as soon as I showed the commission I had received to the Prince of Orange, he exclaimed,

"If this man is deceiving us, De Cerons, he forgets no means to blind the eyes of all. However, we must take advantage of the opportunity, at all events, whether it be afforded for the purpose of deceiving us or not. Are you willing, De Cerons, to take the risk of a hazardous journey to join my brother in Mons, to tell him that the Duke of Alva will certainly besiege him, and that I as certainly will march to his relief without the loss of a moment: then to hasten on yourself into France, and raising a regiment, to bring it to our aid?"

It may easily be supposed that I did not hesitate; and with a train, which had now been increased again to about twenty men, I set off for Mons. I reached it some time before the siege commenced, and was received with joy by the gallant and enterprising Prince of Nassau, who that very day took me round the fortifications, and entertained me at supper; perhaps making a little more of my arrival than the event warranted, in order to raise the spirits of the garrison and inhabitants.

After supper, torches were waiting to light me home to the quarters prepared for me; and, accompanied by one of the Count's officers, I was proceeding through the streets, when we were met by a small party of soldiery, who stopped to look after us. The next moment I heard my own name pronounced aloud, and a young officer running after us, cast his arms affectionately round me. What was my surprise to behold my young cousin, Charles! He followed me to my quarters; and I now learned that Albert, as well as himself, unable any longer to endure the tyranny of their step-mother, and the daily disgrace of their father, had quitted their paternal roof, and, with the young Prince of Nassau, had thrown themselves into the city of Mons. There they had met with a part of my old band, commanded by Moric Endem; and when I told them that I was about to

raise a regiment to join the Prince of Orange, they besought me eagerly to let them serve under me.

That matter was settled easily; Moric was sent for, and I thought would have gone mad with delight at seeing me again. He was evidently not in such good circumstances as when I had left him, and he declared that fortune had quitted my band when I was taken at Jarnac. Only six of the men had survived Moncontour and Arnai le Duc; and on the following morning I begged Count Ludovic* to permit me to take these six, with Moric and my two young cousins, to form a sort of nucleus for my future regiment. He hesitated; for, to say truth, he had no men to spare; but the difficulty was removed by my offering to leave an equal number of those who had accompanied me to Mons.

I was eager to proceed on my journey; but my adventures in Mons were not yet over. It was necessary to procure money for raising the force I intended to levy, as I had transmitted to Martin Vern all the wealth I had acquired during my absence. It luckily happened, however, that I had a letter from the good merchant to one of the wealthy Catholic bankers of Mons, and to him I hastened as soon as I had given Moric and my two cousins notice to prepare for departure.

I found the old man I sought in a dressing-gown of rich brocade, a black velvet cap on his large head, and a pen in his mouth. He listened to me, read the letter, and looked me all over in silence somewhat offensive; and at length I told him that I was in haste, and begged that he would attend to my demand.

"You are not like him here described," said the old man, dryly; "how shall I know, if you be in such haste, that you are the right person?"

I answered, I believe, somewhat angrily, and he rejoined, "Ha, ha! Frenchmen are always prompt; but it so befals, young gentleman, that there is in this very

* Better known in modern history as Count Louis of Nassau.

house, at this very time, a partner of the house of Martin Vern and Company."

"What, his nephew?" I cried.

"Not so, young gentleman," answered the merchant; "but he shall be called in, and you shall soon have your answer."

Thus saying he rose, and opening a door behind him, spoke a word to some one in the neighbouring room. The next moment appeared in the doorway the figure of my old acquaintance, Solomon Ahar. The good Jew started forward, and, in his Oriental fashion, fell upon my neck embracing me.

"How I have longed to see thee, my son!" he said; "how delighted my poor Miriam will be to hear that thou art here in safety; but stay not in this town till they bring the armies round it and lay siege to it. It is well to be here while one can come and go; for there is always much traffic in gold and silver and light goods, when a place is likely to be assaulted from without; but no wise man should stay after there be gates shut against the goers out as well as against the comers in. Stay but till I go, my son, which will now be in a few days, and then journey with me to Paris, where a certain gold-hilted dagger, with seven fine jewels in the haft, is laid up safely for thee; and thy money has been put out to interest, and used in traffic, and has brought thee, I think, well nigh fifty for the hundred."

There was now no further question in regard to the money, and having informed the Jew, who was really grateful and kindly-hearted, what were my purposes, received some valuable information from him as to where I was likely to procure men. I then took what money I wanted, and bidding Solomon Ahar adieu, was soon once more beyond the walls of Mons, and on the high road towards France.

There were parties of the enemy about between Mons and Cambray, and it was with some difficulty that we reached the French frontier. There, however,

I soon increased my force to between three and four hundred men, and was thinking of beginning my march with that number, to join the Prince of Orange, when I received letters from the Admiral and from the Prince d'Auvergne, to both of whom I had written, advising me to join a considerable force under the gallant, but wrong-headed Genlis, who had raised, by a commission from the King, a force of nearly six thousand men. At the same time the Admiral informed me that the King, at his request, had raised the estate of Les Bois into a lordship for me, under the title of Count les Bois and de Cerons.

This was indeed very joyful news; and though the newly-acquired influence of the Admiral at the Court of France, seemed to me almost inconceivable, yet I obeyed his desire at once, and prepared to join Genlis, though determined to act independently of him if his rash vanity should render it necessary. The Admiral's letter had distinctly stated that Genlis was about to march to join the Prince of Orange; but when I, at length, met that officer at Noyon, I found him determined to advance direct upon Mons.

As by this time the siege of that place was formed, and as I had heard, on good authority, that the Duke of Ascot was marching to swell the forces of Alva's army, the idea which Genlis had taken up, that he could deliver Mons with a force of less than six thousand men, seemed to me so absurd, that I told him at once I would not accompany him, my intention and duty being to join the Prince of Orange. He answered at first by a sneer; but shortly after begged me at least to accompany him as far as St. Quentin, as he had learned that the peasantry on the frontier had been armed by the Duke of Alva, and were in force in that neighbourhood.

On the following day we made a short march towards Ham, but we soon learned that Don Ferdinand de Toledo was before us, with a regular army, equal to

our own, instead of a troop of ill-disciplined peasantry. The enemy was now within ten miles' march of us; a battle was inevitable, and, of course, it was impossible even to think of retiring at that moment. Yet, ere the sun went down, I had only one desire,—namely, to mount my horse and ride to Paris at full speed. At Guiscard, where we halted for the night, a courier reached me from the Prince Dauphin. The words of the letter were so few and prompt that they evinced how eagerly and hastily my friend had written.

"If you can, with honour," so the letter went, "give up your command and come to Paris, do so without a moment's delay. Your rival, without warning or notice of any kind, has returned—is in Paris, and in the house of the Baron de Blancford. You will blame me for this, but I can endure the blame; for, on my honour, I do not deserve it. His journey has been concealed with care; and, though I watched anxiously, I have been deceived. Come quickly, then, De Cerons, for you Protestants now carry everything at the Court before you, and if you delay an hour, Monsieur de Blancford's influence may have overborne all. Think well, too, what must be your course; for remember, that, as we both foresaw, your late opposition to the will of the father in the marriage of his own daughter, was declared vexatious by the Parliament, and you were fined a hundred crowns. If you resolve on letting the sword decide between you and your rival, forget not your friend, D'Auvergne."

Scarcely giving the messenger time to refresh himself, I despatched him with two letters, one to the Dauphin d'Auvergne, informing him of the position in which we stood with regard to the enemy, and telling him I would but stay to fight, and then hasten back to the capital; and the other to good Martin Vern, whose parting words in regard to my love of Louise gave me the only glimpse of hope that could now visit me. To him I told all that had occurred as briefly as possible;

but besought him, at all events, to use the utmost exertions to stop any hasty steps on the part of the Baron.

It may easily be imagined that the tidings I had received did not reconcile me greatly to the mad folly of Genlis, and I began the march on the following morning, out of spirits and out of humour; but the movements of the whole force, and the negligence and vain confidence with which Genlis conducted it, made a great addition to my discomfort. At length we came to a small stream, over which it was necessary to construct a bridge, and seeing, from the disarray of the troops, that if attacked at that moment by an enemy one half of our strength, we might be absolutely cut to pieces, I caused my men to seize upon the tower of an old church, which had before been pierced for muskefry, and which, while the rest were busy at the bridge, I took some pains to strengthen, having an impression on my mind that we should meet with a check.

When the bridge was concluded, we again began our advance, and entered a little wood, through which we straggled rather than marched. We had scarcely passed it, however, when a party which had been thrown forward, was driven in with a strong body of men at arms at their heels. I charged and broke the Spanish men at arms. But it now became evident that a trap had been laid for us; a tremendous fire was opened upon my men from a bed of osiers that flanked the ground; charge after charge of the enemy's cavalry took place! and, overwhelmed by numbers, as well as taken unaware, after maintaining a hopeless combat for nearly an hour and a half, we were obliged to fly as best we could. Genlis, it must be said, did all that courage and skill and coolness could do to remedy his former faults, but in vain. He himself was taken in endeavouring to cover the retreat of the infantry, and all I could do was to bring off a part—a very small part of my own men, with one piece of artillery.

I was hotly pursued, however, and had no time to destroy the bridge. My only resource was to throw myself into the church, and defend it as long as possible. What I had done to strengthen it in the morning now proved my salvation. The cavalry who followed kept us blockaded during the whole of that night and a part of the next day, but they could not remain long enough to starve us out; we kept them at a distance with our fire arms, and a small body of musketeers which joined them were driven back with loss.

At length I offered to capitulate, as I found the men beginning sadly to feel the want of water; and the terms granted me were certainly far more favourable than I dared hope. We were permitted to march out with our arms, but it was exacted from us that we should swear not to fight against the King of Spain for two complete years; and, well satisfied with the result, we retired from our post and made the best of our way back to Noyon. It was there that my young cousin, Charles, first complained of a wound in the shoulder, but he represented it as slight; and leaving the men we had brought off under his command, I set out for Paris with Moric Endem and one or two others, determined to obtain, if possible, through the intervention of the Admiral, some reward for the gallant fellows who survived our defeat.

Albert de Blancford remained with his brother; but I afterwards found that the wound of my poor cousin Charles had that very night assumed so unfavourable an appearance, that he was obliged to relinquish the command to Albert, who, terrified at the state to which he soon saw his brother reduced, divided the greater portion of the money I had left with him amongst the men, and suffered the shattered remnant of the regiment to disperse. He then placed his brother in a litter and returned to Paris, seeking his father's house immediately, but finding nothing there but sorrow and confusion.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE distance was considerable, but our horses were good; we were in the month of August, when days are long, and we accomplished the journey from Noyon to Paris in one day. We entered the capital just as the shades of twilight were beginning to fall, and I paused, for a moment, to consider in what direction I should first turn my steps. I had resolved, however, not to go to the Prince Dauphin, as I knew that, in case of my rivalry with De Blaye ending in our settling the dispute with the sword, D'Auvergne would insist upon accompanying me to the field, and I could not endure the thought of seeing the hope and strength of that noble house run the risk of such an encounter for my sake.* My hesitation, therefore, only was whether I should first seek the Admiral, to inform him of the fatal result of Genlis' expedition, or go at once to good Martin Vern, to hear news of my poor Louise. Love had well nigh triumphed; but I did resist, and, turning my rein towards the Rue de Bethisy, where I had been informed the Admiral resided, I found his abode, which was in a handsome inn. There, however, I learned that he was himself at the Court; and, having satisfied myself by doing my duty, I turned my horse's head towards the dwelling of the merchant.

Martin Vern and his partners, though they had taken many risks during the war, had been enriched in an extraordinary degree, by the restoration of peace, and the favour which all the Protestants had so speedily acquired. Debts, which had appeared almost hopeless, had been paid with long arrears of interest; and though many others remained, yet the good merchant was now one of the most wealthy men in Paris. His house showed it, but not himself; for, on being ushered into

* It was the custom in France, at that time, for the seconds to fight, as well as the principals.

the room where he sat at supper with his wife, his brother, his nephew, and his children, I could certainly discover no change of demeanour from the good, plain merchant that I had first seen on my journey to Angoulême. They were all delighted to see me; and, unwilling to disturb them, I sat down to partake of their meal, while Moric Endem, and the rest of my followers, obtained a lodging in an inn hard by.

During supper, Martin Vern was grave and thoughtful, but not sad: his nephew had become a fine and noble-looking young man, and there was in his whole appearance an air of smartness and manly dignity which bespoke a change of thoughts and feelings since we had last met.

Ere supper was well concluded, the latter rose, saying to his uncle, "I will go to Monsieur Ahar, and bring what he has got for the Seigneur de Cerons," and as soon as he was gone, the elder merchant added, "You know, I believe, Monsieur de Cerons, that your old acquaintance, Monsieur Solomon Ahar, has become a partner of ours: but, doubtless, you know not how his conversion was brought about."

"Converted!" I exclaimed. "Do you mean to say that he has become a Christian?"

"He could not otherwise have become a partner in our house. He is a good Catholic Christian, thank God! But I was going to tell you how this was brought about. My nephew, having got over some of the follies of his youth, learned to love and esteem those qualities of mind and heart which are really worth love, and he found them combined with beauty and affection in Miriam Ahar. There was one objection,—her religion; but that Martin found means to remove: and the good Jew declared that, as all things were reversed now-a-days, the father might as well follow the religion of the child, instead of the child following the religion of her father. He accordingly made his abjuration, as his relation, Levi, had done, and was received into the bosom of

the Church. Miriam becomes my nephew's bride in a few weeks, and in the mean time this conversion has obtained for him so much celebrity amongst the Catholic divines, that I do believe they would make him a bishop if they could. But that would prevent his marriage, you know, seigneur, and therefore he remains a merchant."

As soon as supper was over, the wife and the children of Martin Vern left us, and he immediately turned to my letter, and to the business that brought me.

"I have much to tell you, seigneur," he said, "and much advice to give you. In the first place, you are saved but by one day; and you owe that to the scheme which our little Miriam devised for you before you went. The Baron, your cousin, is indebted in a large sum to Solomon Ahar, and in a lesser sum to me, and as he promises this Seigneur de Blaye a large dowry with his child, Miriam proposed that the whole debt, which comprises more than all his movable wealth, should be claimed at once. I was unwilling to do as she wished, except in case of absolute need; and accordingly when, on a former occasion, you found other means to stop the signature of the contract, I held back. Now, however, I knew there was no time to be lost, and even had your letter not reached me, I would have acted as I have done, for I have been almost daily at the Baron's house, as there is every day need of money for the husband, or jewels and rich stuff for the wife. By this means I heard and knew that the Baron had sworn his daughter should consent to marry the young Lord of Blaye, or that he would declare himself a Catholic, and use those means which our religion gives, to force her to obey. It is not, howevêr, that he loves this Lord of Blaye, for he abhors him; but it is, my good lord, that his wife has power over him, of some kind which we know not. Some secret is in her hands, depend upon it, which puts him wholly in her power. However that may be, the day for signing the contract was named as yesterday,

and the hour, noon. The whole had met when I presented myself. I knew that the money to pay the dowry was prepared. I had armed myself with all legal forms, and went, accompanied by those who knew each turn of law. The money was paid to me instead of the Lord of Blaye; and the Baron, with a proud air, said, 'It mattered not; that he was ready to sign, and that, in order to pay the dowry he had promised, and not to fail in one tittle of his word to Monsieur de Blaye, he would sell the estate of Cerons even by auction in the halls of the Palais de Justice, and discharge the amount before the week was over.'"

"Good Heaven! has he done so?" I cried. "It was always my ambition to recover that land."

"He has not done so yet, seigneur," replied Martin Vern; "but this is Friday—to-morrow is the last day of the week: his word is pledged; the sale proclaimed, and he will not retract; though, when the Seigneur de Blaye coldly declared it would be better for none to sign the contract till the dowry was ready, I could see the blood mount into the Baron's cheek and forehead, till I feared the veins would burst. He turned towards his wife, but that fierce lady held up her finger to him, and he was cowed in a moment. Unless you, sir, can stop the sale,—unless you can prove that the estate of Cerons cannot be sold—the estate will be sold, and the contract signed. Nay, more, the young lady must become the wife of one she abhors, or be plunged into the imprisonment of a convent, from which you can never deliver her.'"

"Alas, alas! my good friend," I said, "I can prove no such thing. I know the estate can be sold, for my own father sold it. It is not hereditary, and depends upon the Baron's will. There is only one means, and that must be tried at once. Louise must fly with me. Under such circumstances it is quite justifiable to do so."

"Before you form any determination, let us consider for a moment, Monsieur de Cerons," replied the mer-

chant, in his cool, calculating tone; "what would you grant that man who would first prove to you that the Lordship of De Cerons cannot be sold in perpetuity, and in the second place point out a way by which you may perhaps fly with the lady that you love; but fly with her as your wife, and with her father's own consent?"

"What would I give?" I exclaimed. "What would I not give? you should say, my good friend."

"Well, then, Monsieur de Cerons," said the merchant, somewhat more rapidly than was his wont, "I must be quick with my conditions, for I hear Martin's steps on the stairs. First, you shall forgive fully and entirely a girl's curiosity. Secondly—but this is a harder task, you shall take a piece of advice without asking a question. Thirdly, you shall put yourself entirely under my guidance for the next three days."

"Willingly!" I said, "willingly;" but as I was speaking, and Martin Vern was turning to his brother, and begging him to witness our contract, his nephew entered the room with Solomon Ahar himself and Miriam, now become a lovely woman.

"O false merchant!" cried the girl, addressing Martin Vern, "you have told him! I see it in his face! You have told him!"

"No, indeed, Miriam," replied the merchant, "I have told him nothing."

Miriam was about to proceed, it seemed, but her father bustled forward, saying, "A truce to nonsense, girl. Let us to business first. Seigneur de Cerons, here is the dagger which is your property, on account of which you are in my debt the sum of ——," and he was taking out his inkhorn to calculate when Martin Vern motioned him to be silent, saying, "Hold me responsible, my good brother, for capital and interest according to law and justice. We have other matters now in hand. Examine your dagger well, Monsieur de Cerons. Do you see nothing to attract you further?"

"I know," I replied, "that the hilt is hollow. My

poor friend, Stuart, assured me that it was so, and that there were papers therein.—I cannot unfasten it, however," I added, trying to do so impatiently. "We had better have a hammer brought."

"Less violent means will do," replied Martin Vern. "If you will give it to that fair lady, she will open it."

Miriam took it from my hand, saying, with a look of graceful deprecation, "Will you, my noble Count, pardon me for an act which I could be well ashamed of, did not these gentlemen tell me that my curiosity may prove of use to you? I first discovered that the dagger's hilt was hollow. I too have opened it, and have read that which it contains. Forgive me—I know, I am sure you will."

And as she spoke she unscrewed the massy ring of gold which encircled the haft, just where the blade was inserted. A large emerald, which was at the top, also unscrewed without difficulty, and the blade then, with a much smaller haft of solid steel was drawn out from the false case of gold. Round the real haft was wrapped a roll of fine vellum, which encircled it six times, and on opening it, I saw at the bottom the handwriting of my cousin, the Baron. It was his name attached to an acknowledgment and covenant duly drawn up in legal form, whereby he deprived himself of the power of ever selling either the lordship of Cerons, or the barony of Blancford, settled the succession of the first-named property on me in case of his death without male heirs, and the other, also, in case of his death childless. The vellum still further set forth that he made this settlement in consideration of receiving the estate of Cerons, and another farm belonging to my father, below their real value, my father being unwilling that they should depart from a race to which they had belonged for centuries. It was witnessed by a personage of the name of Des Chappes; and Martin Vern, pointing to that name as I stood thunderstruck gazing on the paper, said,

"He is still living, and revered by the whole Parlia-

ment, of which he is one of the most honourable members. I have myself asked him if he remembers the transaction, and can tell you, that having a deep regard for your late father, he can swear to every line, though he be past eighty years of age."

"These are, indeed, great and extraordinary tidings," I said, grasping the good merchant's hand: "but I fear, my friend, that by exercising the rights that this paper gives me, I shall but make the separation between myself and my proud cousin the more complete. How shall I by any means here presented to me, gain his regard or his affection!"

"Did you never in life observe, Monsieur de Cerons," said the merchant, "that men often treat haughtily and harshly those they love, while they are courteous and yielding to those they fear? The Baron loves you far better than any one but his own children: he respects, he esteems you, and at the same time he hates, contemns, and fears your rival. If you assist and support him against this Lord of Blaye, while you maintain your own rights with kindly firmness, you will cause him to rest upon you, and give way to his own better feelings. Let us first stop the sale: that, depend upon it, will stop the marriage. Then, if we had time, we could leave time to do its work. But," he added, musing,—"but I will not trust to what time may bring forth. Everything is a matter of merchandise in this world: what will you give for a wife you love, Monsieur de Cerons?"

"All that I have on earth," I replied, smiling.

"Nay, nay—not so much as that," answered the merchant. "Will you give sixty thousand livres?"

"If I had it, I would," I answered; "but I have it not."

"Very nearly in my hands," replied the merchant. "Twelve thousand crowns at fifty-seven sols Parisis, make—But it matters not! you shall have it. Do you consent to give it?"

"I do," I answered: "but how, my good friend, am I to—"

"Look here, Monsieur de Cerons," said the merchant, taking out a portfolio, and placing in my hand a note or bill of exchange, "you see here, one Augustus, Seigneur of Blaye, agrees and promises to pay on demand to Martin Vern, the sum of sixty thousand livres, being the remainder of an account between them. If Martin Vern transfers this bill to you, and you, in consideration of certain concessions, transfer it to a certain Baron de Blancford—What say you?"

"That there is hope," I replied, "that there is hope; but yet, my good friend, there is much to be thought of."

"Not much of which I have not thought, sir," replied the merchant. "You have already agreed to put yourself entirely under my guidance for the next three days; but you have promised also to take a piece of advice without asking a question,—are you ready so to do?"

"I am always ready to keep any promise," I replied. "What is the advice?"

"It is a somewhat harsh one," answered Martin Vern: "neither more nor less than to execute a bill of sale to me, this night, of your château and estate of Les Bois, in consideration of which I will give you bills, money, or credit, for sixty thousand crowns."

He spoke gravely, even sadly, and with a frowning brow; and when I commenced my reply with "But—" he stopped me, saying,

"You promised, Monsieur de Cerons, to ask no questions. Hear me," he said, in a lower voice, and drawing me somewhat aside, "I know little—indeed, I know nothing,—but I suspect, and I fear much, Monsieur de Cerons; and think that if you can obtain the hand of your fair Louise with her father's consent, and fly with her at once far from Paris, you will do well and wisely. Follow my advice in this; take my note for the money; let me become the apparent proprietor of Les Bois till better times, and I will explain your con-

duct to those who gave it you. If you never need the money, you shall be free to give it back, and keep the land. At all events, you shelter yourself against the danger of confiscation."

What he said was so true that I should have been foolish to neglect it, suspicious as I still was of the sudden change in the feelings of the Court, which had so completely taken in the Admiral and the Queen of Navarre. Accordingly, while his nephew, his brother, and Solomon Ahar, were still present, the papers were drawn up between the merchant and myself, leaving him the nominal, though not the real proprietor of the estate of Les Bois.

Not long after this, Martin Vern and myself were left alone, but the business of the day was not yet over. He insisted that his house should be my home for the time; but ere he suffered me to retire to rest, he kept me in conversation for two or three hours more, explaining to me all his views, with mercantile brevity and accuracy; and my conduct during the following day, which I am about to detail, was the result of the consultation that we then held.

At length, tired and exhausted, I went to the room prepared for me; and no prince's palace could, certainly, have afforded me more comfortable or luxurious accommodation. I was too much fatigued, however, to sleep for some time; and ere I had enjoyed any real repose for more than two hours, young Martin Vern entered my room, and took his seat by my bed-side. He remained for more than half an hour, and his conversation was not like that of his uncle, devoted entirely to business. He talked of the affairs of the day, and discussed some light, some serious topics, with which my readers would be but little edified. It seemed to me, however, that there was something labouring in his mind all the time while we conversed; and, as he rose to depart, he put his head close down to mine, saying, in a whisper,—

"Whenever you hear the great bell of St. Germain l'Auxerois ring at an unusual hour, set off out of Paris, if it be day; and fly to me, if it be night."

Then, laying his finger on his lips as an injunction to secrecy, he left the room without waiting for further question.

CHAPTER XXII.

I NEED hardly here detail my visit to the Admiral de Coligny, which was my first act after rising the next morning, as that visit had no results either affecting myself or the Protestant cause. I had, in the meantime, however, written to my cousin, giving him tidings of his sons, and asking to speak with him on matters of deep importance to us both. I said all that was kind, all that was affectionate; and I besought him to give me an interview alone, if it were but of a few minutes, before mid-day.

On my return to the merchant's house, I found an answer. It was not in his handwriting, though an attempt had evidently been made to imitate it; and the reply, though given in an affected tone of courtesy, was tantamount to a refusal.

The Baron de Blancford, it said, would be very happy to see me, as well as any other of his near relations, and would receive me whenever I chose to call upon him; but at the same time, to save me unnecessary trouble, it might be as well to let me know that he should not be able to entertain me till after the following Monday. The letter went on to add some unmeaning compliments on my valour and distinction, and some heartless thanks for the care and attention I had shown his sons.

After I had read it, I handed it to good Martin Vern, whose only comment was, "Well, then, we must go to

the halls of the Parliament, where every thing is already prepared for us. Come, seigneur, I am at your service."

It was, I confess, most painful to me to enter into open contest with the father of Louise de Blancford, and I determined that nothing should draw from me one angry word, or rash expression. We were upon the ground first, however, and as I walked up and down in the hall of Lost Steps, Martin Vern somewhat reassured me by telling me that I should find my cousin a completely altered being.

In about ten minutes, there was a slight movement amongst the crowd of petitioners and others at the further end of the hall, and an old man advanced from the door which they surrounded, with an upright carriage, but slow step, towards the entrance of the great chamber. He was pale, and much shrivelled with age; but, though small in stature, he was dignified, and his eye seemed to have lost none of its fire. On seeing Martin Vern, he stopped, and turned his eyes on me for a moment; but the next instant, he advanced, and took me by the hand.

"I cannot be mistaken," he said. "This must be Monsieur de Cerons. My dear young friend! I rejoice to meet you once, before I go to meet your father again in those mansions which, I doubt not, he has reached, and which I humbly trust in Christ that I may be also permitted soon to enter."

I needed no other words to tell me that this was the President des Chappes, of whom Martin Vern had spoken; and after a few words more of inquiry and retrospect, the worthy magistrate turned the conversation to the subject which had brought me thither.

"I have come myself," he said, "though not very well, to prohibit the sale of this property, not knowing whether you would arrive in time or not. No one can know so well as I do the terms on which the transfer was made to your cousin, as I drew the very paper I see now in your hands. I was at that time a lawyer in

the royal Court of Bordeaux; and, though not exactly in my line of business, I put the matter in order for your father with my own hand. Alas! I knew not that I should never see him more after I witnessed the signature of that deed.—But here, I think, come our opponents; I will not call them enemies, for I love not to see a breach in families. This must be either the Baron de Blancford, or some other person who thinks himself of importance."

I turned to see, and perceived the Baron, followed by several other gentlemen, advancing rapidly up the hall, and speaking—it seemed to me, angrily—with the young Seigneur de Blaye. At all events, their brows were frowning, and their cheeks were heated; and not knowing whether the sight of my attendants, whom I had left without, might not have produced all these signs of indignation, I remained, taking no further notice, that the storm might burst. To my surprise, however, the Baron advanced, and took my hand. "Henri," he said, in a voice that trembled with emotion, "my poor boy has arrived, I fear dying of the wound you mentioned in your letter. I see you feel for me," he continued; "and no one shall prevent me expressing my thanks for the kindness and—and—and—"

While he spoke, his eyes had rested on the pale and withered countenance of the President des Chappes: a look of doubt and surprise came into his face; he turned white; he hesitated, and then added, confusedly, "Charles is eager and anxious to see you. He thought you would have come this morning.—Who is that beside you—the old man?" he asked, in a lower tone.

"That," I replied, "is an old friend of my father's, Monsieur des Chappes, formerly of Bordeaux."

The baron trembled excessively; and, as far as possible to let him recover himself, I went on to say, "I would have been at your house long ago, but you yourself refused to receive me till after Monday."

"I!" cried the Baron, "I said no such thing. I said

I would receive you whenever you chose to come—I—"

"My fair cousin, I have your note!" I replied; "there it is!"

He took it and read it through, and certainly, never did I behold the cheek, even of a timid girl, change its hue so frequently. At length, however, he tore it to atoms, and trampled it under his feet, saying, "I am fooled! It is the production of a lady, Henri de Cerons, and therefore I must say no more."

He paused, and gazed round him for a moment or two in silence, as if uncertain how to proceed, while the Seigneur de Blaye remained playing with his sword-knot, and maintaining a determined silence; and the rest who had followed the Baron, conversed together in a low tone.

"Now speak with him alone," whispered Martin Vern, who had been talking to Monsieur des Chappes, and I immediately followed the suggestion, saying, "As it appears, my noble cousin, that the interview which I asked this morning for the purpose of communicating to you a most important fact, was only prevented by a mistake of the Baroness in regard to your intentions, perhaps you will give me five minutes' conversation with you alone; the proclamation of sale will not take place for a quarter of an hour."

"Where can we speak alone?" said the Baron, with a furtive look at Des Chappes. "I fear that—"

"Oh, in one of the bureaux," said the President, who had heard all that passed; "I will wait here for you, my young friend. Huissier, lead these two gentlemen to some cabinet where they may confer."

"And pray," said the Seigneur de Blaye, "am I to remain here idling my time away till you return, Baron?"

"You came, good sir, to see the sale, I think," replied the Baron, sharply, "not to enjoy my conversation, which, I suppose, could not be very entertaining to

you;" and thus saying he followed the Huissier, who led us to a small room, where we were left alone.

The moment the door was shut, the Baron seized me by both hands, and gazed in my face with a wild and haggard eye, "Henri!" he exclaimed, "what are you here for? What is the meaning of this?"

"The meaning, sir," I answered calmly, but firmly, "the meaning is simply that the estates of Cerons cannot be sold. Make me not say anything painful to you, but you know, as well as I do, that they must not, and cannot be sold."

"Henri! Henri!" burst forth from the Baron, "do not drive me to despair!"

"God forbid!" I cried, earnestly; "I seek anything but that. On the contrary, turn, my lord, to those who really love and can really serve you, and amongst the most zealous count myself. I have raised myself, unsupported and alone, from nothing. With your support, and in your defence and aid, I can do far more; and if you will let me, I will in ten minutes chastise yon empty coxcomb, who seeks your sweet child's dowry, not her hand. The estate of Cerons cannot be sold; but still I will enable you to—"

"You cannot,—you cannot," replied the Baron, interrupting me vehemently. "You do not know that I have bound myself to him in a large sum that I cannot pay. The money I borrowed to pay the poor child's dowry is gone. I have nothing to give with her. He will claim the bond I gave him. If the sale be stopped, I am dishonoured."

"Nay, nay," I said; "all this may well be amended."

"Impossible! impossible!" he said, in a low tone. "I am ruined, disgraced. Why, your very opposition is enough. I cannot stop the sale without calling his claim upon me. You cannot stop it without exposing all."

"But hear me," I said; "but hear me. I know all —you have nothing to explain. If you will consent to

my marriage with Louise, dowerless, portionless, I will allow you to stay the sale without one word regarding the cause—hear me, hear me!—and I will instantly put it in your power to quash this man's claim with a single word, and render him your debtor. I know he cannot pay that debt, and therefore—"

"Can you do this? Can you do this?" cried the Baron, with his whole face brightening.

"Ay, my cousin, I can," I replied, "and will this moment; and if he dare but sneer, I will lash him from that hall like an unruly hound."

"That is needless! that is needless!" replied the Baron, a look of triumph coming over his countenance. "He will be my debtor—I not his; that will be sufficient. But, O Henri," he added, while his look fell again, and his cheek became pale,—"O Henri!—there is another!—there is another!—Perdition is on either hand, and if I snatch at the aid you nobly and generously offer, I fall into another abyss, perhaps worse than that from which you snatch me; and yet if the sale do not take place, it is double destruction. What can I do?—what ought I to do? Tell me!—tell me, if you pity me!"

"I will tell you, sir, if you will listen to my advice," I replied; "but you must decide speedily, for time wears. The most pressing evil is the one before you. The President des Chappes will instantly forbid the sale if it be proclaimed. The cause of the prohibition must then be put on record. Nothing can ever erase that. Then comes upon you this Lord of Blaye; and, unprincipled libertine as he is, think you he will spare you in any shape? At all events, sweep this away, and let us meet whatever other risk or difficulty may be in store as best we may. Will you consent, sir?"

"You know not, Henri de Cerons,—you know not what those difficulties are. But what you ask must be *done*. Louise shall be yours;—but you promise to aid *me—to* save me if you can?"

"To the very utmost of my power," I answered; "but I know or guess more than you suppose, sir. You are threatened with danger if you give your child to any but this libertine,"—he bowed his head in token of assent,—"and it is the Baroness you fear?" I went on, but he interrupted me, exclaiming, "Not her!—not her!"

"But the secrets she possesses," I rejoined; and he turned deadly pale.

"The only way," he said after a pause of some minutes,—"the only way will be for you to conceal your marriage."

"No, my lord," I replied, "that cannot be; but I will conceal your consent.—Hear me!" I continued, seeing him about to grasp at the proposal eagerly without any conditions,—"hear me out. I will conceal your consent during your whole life, unless compelled by any process of law to reveal it, or driven to do so by any attempts to annul our union. If you agree to that, draw up at once in your own hand your formal approbation of our union upon those conditions; and then if ever I produce that paper without need, the dishonour will fall on me. I will in return assign this bond to you; and, walking forth together from this room, we will at once forbid the sale, and set yon braggart boy at defiance. There are paper and pens upon that desk."

"Be it so,—be it so!" cried the Baron, seeming to revive from the tone of confidence with which I spoke; and taking the pen he wrote the words I put into his mouth. He read it over, and then gave it to me, and imagination can scarcely do justice to the feelings with which I received it.

I then assigned to him the bond; and while I wrote he remained with his eyes fixed musingly upon the ground.

"Henri," he said, taking it when I had done, but scarcely looking at the signature, "you think that I am either weak to be so swayed by a woman, or criminal

that I should fear her. But believe me when I swear to you that she holds her power over me by a gross falsehood. A few unfortunate words written thoughtlessly, and seeming, as she has turned them, to countenance a deed that I abhorred, have bound me to misery and slavery."

"I grieve, sir, most truly," I replied; "but I hope the time will come when you will trust me more fully, and I doubt not then to be able—"

At that moment, however, one of the Huissiers opened the door, saying, "Monsieur le Baron, the sale is about to be proclaimed." We both hurried to the hall where it was to take place; but ere we reached it the proclamation was made, and the President des Chappes was in the act of saying, "I prohibit the sale in the name of Henri, Count de Cerons and Les Bois."

"Speak!—speak, sir!" I whispered to the Baron; "forbid it also, that no cause may be entered on my part."

"I prohibit the sale, also," he said, raising his voice aloud,—and then added, in an ordinary tone, "I have just received intelligence which alters altogether my intentions."

"You have, sir?" exclaimed the Seigneur de Blaye, advancing with a menacing air. "Then you are, as I trust you remember, my debtor to the amount of forty thousand livres."

"Pardon me, sir!" said the Baron, in that cold bitter tone which I had more than once heard him use towards myself in former days,—"I think if I read this paper right, that it is you are my debtor to the amount of twenty thousand. We will settle our accounts whenever you think fit."

The young man looked at the paper, and evidently recognised it well; then turned his eyes upon me, saying, "I understand to whom I am most a debtor, and will take occasion to settle my accounts with him before a week be over."

"I trust you will be punctual, Monsieur de Blaye," I replied; but the President des Chappes interfered, saying, "Young men! young men! many words like that uttered here will send you to the châtelet. I beseech you, sir," he continued, speaking to De Blaye, "as it seems to me that you have nothing to do with this cause, to leave the hall first."

De Blaye was about to reply, but one or two of the gentlemen who had accompanied him and the Baron thither, took him by the arm and drew him away. We remained in the hall some ten minutes longer, the Baron speaking to Monsieur des Chappes in as unconcerned a tone as he could command. The moment we had issued forth into the street, however, he spoke to me eagerly and long upon the subject whereon my own thoughts were most earnestly bent. He, himself, now urged my immediate marriage and departure with Louise, and he promised to speak with her and prepare her mind for it.

"If you are long," he said, "the matter will be discovered, and I shall be forced either to sanction your union openly, or to oppose it. The latter," he continued, "of course must not be done; but as you have promised to spare me, Henri, as far as possible, I trust that by the utmost secrecy and expedition, you will let the whole assume the appearance of being done without my consent."

My answer may easily be conceived; but the Baron's fears were not less eager than a lover's hopes; and he turned instantly from me to Martin Vern, who stood upon the steps of the Palais just behind us. Their conversation tended all to the same object; for the Baron, from various words that had been spoken, comprehended that the greater part of my information had been derived from the merchant. I did not hear the whole, however; for at that moment a gay train passed along, and before I was well aware, my hand was in that of the Prince Dauphin. The first expression of his

countenance was that of pleasure at seeing me; but the next was shaded by some other feelings, and after a few rapid questions he asked me to come to Champigny, and spend the following day there.

There was a hope in my bosom, however, which prevented me from saying "Yes;" and I replied, with a smile, that perhaps I might be obliged to quit Paris ere that. He smiled again, but seemed puzzled by my reply, saying, "Well, well, let it be so;" but ere he left me, he came closer, and said in a low tone, "Promise me upon your honour, De Cerons, to come to me at Champigny to-morrow night, if you do not quit Paris to go elsewhere. I have something important to say to you."

I promised without hesitation; and, grasping my hand warmly, he left me and went on. "Now," said the Baron, as I turned towards him again, "I have settled it all with this good merchant at whose house you lodge. Come with me, Henri, for Charles, poor boy, cries eagerly to see you; and to-night I will visit you and tell you, I trust, that all is prepared."

Bidding adieu to Martin Vern for the time, with many thanks for all that he had done, I mounted my horse, and accompanied the Baron to his house, saying, as we rode along, "May I not hope to see Louise also? If we are to be so soon united, it were but needful that I should speak with her myself."

"Nay, Henri, nay," replied my cousin, with the blood mantling up in his cheek: "press it not if the Baroness be there. If she be not, for a moment you can speak with the dear child, to tell her that, in order to save all further pain on either part, your union is to take place in her chamber to-morrow night. Good old La Tour shall be brought from Montmorency to speak a blessing on you; the contract shall be duly drawn, and Albert shall be present, though I must not. One staircase shall be placed in the hands of your people to insure your passing unopposed; the merchant engages *that* a gate of the city shall be kept open to give you

exit; and then, as soon as she is yours, fly with her into the South without delay."

"To-morrow night, did you say?" I exclaimed, in some surprise: "can all be arranged by that time?"

"All, all," replied the Baron; "and oh, Henri! when she is your wife, tell her that, towards her at least, her father was not made harsh by nature,—tell, Henri—tell her, in one word, that she is like her mother; ay, and that whatever she may think, I love her for that likeness."

"Oh! Monsieur de Blancford," I cried, moved by those words, "why, why will you not shake off the yoke that presses thus on you?—why do you not treat her threats with scorn?"

"Because, Henri,—because I have sold myself to a fiend," he answered, almost fiercely. "Speak not of it now: one day I will tell you more."

We rode on; and I saw Charles de Blancford, though terribly changed, indeed, in the space of two short days. I saw my Louise, too, but it was only for a few short minutes: that, however, was enough to tell her that our fate was changed; and to ask her if she would consent to be mine so suddenly, so secretly, so unprepared. She replied not at first; but her looks left all other answer needless; and, ere she could reply, we heard the arrival of the Baroness in the court-yard, and we parted.

With Charles I sat for some hours; and all I had to relate of the transactions between his father and myself, seemed to afford him better medicines than the druggist's shop could supply. I saw not the Baroness; but, after my return to the house of Martin Vern, the Baron came, and we passed nearly three hours in making every arrangement. The good merchant sat by and listened gravely, even sadly. Once I saw him bury his eyes in his hands, and he sighed often and deeply; but he promised all that we required, in regard to his own aid; and when the Baron asked him if he did not think that

our plan must certainly succeed, he replied, with a smile that I afterwards understood better, "I will stake my life upon it."

CHAPTER XXIII.

It was two o'clock in the morning of Sunday, the 24th of August, St. Bartholomew's day, in the year 1572, when I reached the *porte cochère* of the Baron de Blancford. The whole town was still; and the soft, balmy air of the summer night, fanned my cheek like the breath of love. The wicket was, as I had expected, open; and behind it was Moric Endem, armed only with the usual weapons of daily defence, with the addition of a pistol in case of need. He was masked, however, as it was agreed that we all should be; and pointing to a small door on the other side of the court, he whispered, "By that door and up the stairs, sir? You will find Andriot and two others there."

I looked towards the porter's room, fearing lest the least noise should disturb those we wished to slumber. All was quiet, however; and passing across the court, I found the door held open by Andriot. On the first landing-place of the stairs, there was another of my men; and higher up, a third. On the next landing, there appeared a light shining through a door a-jar, and I gently pushed it open and entered. It admitted me to a small ante-room; and watching on the opposite side, was Albert de Blancford. The noble boy embraced me gladly; and, with a whispered word or two of joyful congratulation, led me into the room beyond. There stood Louise, somewhat pale and agitated; but the dear girl suffered not such feelings to veil or check her affection for the man she loved; and starting forward from the side of old La Tour, she cast herself into my arms.

I soothed and caressed her for a moment; while the good old pastor came forward, and grasped me eagerly by the hand. The contract of our marriage lay upon the table; but we had many words to say to each other, and had not yet signed it, when the door behind us opened, and the Baron himself entered.

"Is it done?" he asked, anxiously: "has it taken place? Be quick, Henri!—be quick!" he added, seeing that the contract was still unsigned. "I fear, and shall fear, for your happiness, my children, till the act is irrevocable."

O happy interruption to words, every one of which occupied those moments that bore Fate upon their wings! Gladly we signed the paper,—gladly we pronounced the vow that bound us to each other,—gladly I placed the mystic symbol of eternal union on the hand of her I loved.

"Now!" cried the Baron, as soon as the whole was completed,—"now depart at once! You will find good Dame Marguelette without the walls, at the spot where your horses wait. Bless thee, my Louise!—bless thee! Be kind to her, Henri, and love none but her: be warned—be warned by what you have seen and know. Get thee to bed, Albert, and let all now be quiet in the house."

Louise trembled a good deal; but I led her on; and gradually, as the severing from her father's house seemed more complete, she clung to me more closely. The Baron, with his own hand, shut the door behind us, and step by step we descended the dark stairs.

"I have thought it better, dear Louise," I said, as we reached the bottom of the stairs, "that we should both be screened from notice as far as possible; and I have here a nun's gown, if you can throw it over your other clothes. Where is the gown, Andriot?"

He gave it me, and Louise covered her white dress with the grey serge. But, as she was in the very act of putting it on, to my surprise, I heard the great and

remarkable bell of St. Germain l'Auxerois begin to ring loudly, as if for matins; and, scarcely had I hurried Louise across the court into the street, when loud shouts were heard from different parts of the town. The bells of all the churches were now heard ringing,—the light of torches and flambeaux was seen advancing from the side of the Louvre; and it was evident that, notwithstanding the profound stillness which had reigned in the city as I passed along, one part, at least, of the population, had been up and watchful.

A moment after, we heard a loud and piercing shriek in the distance, and Louise, trembling in every limb, clung to my arm. At first she seemed to think that all this referred to ourselves,—that we were discovered, and about to be dragged back; but the cries from every part of the town soon undeceived her: and, as I remembered the various little incidents of the last three days—the warning of young Martin Vern,—the eager and pressing invitation of the Prince Dauphin, I doubted not that some dark and horrible scheme for the destruction of all the Protestants in Paris was in the act of execution.

Moric Endem closed the door behind us, and, with the other men, sprung to my side; and, remembering the caution of the young merchant, I drew Louise on, with scarcely a word, towards his dwelling.

The street in which we were, was still nearly vacant, with the exception of some people bearing torches, who were coming from the farther end; but, just as we quitted the shadow of the Hôtel de Blancford, a man darted forth from a door-way on the other side, crying "Help! help! Here are Protestants escaping!" and, at the same time, he seized me by the arm, and aimed a blow at my head. He was masked, but the voice was that of De Blaye, and he certainly would have cut me down, had not Moric Endem, always prompt and cool, levelled his pistol at the assailant's head, and fired. He fell dead upon the spot; but the cry had brought a number of the

torchmen down at full speed, and I certainly thought that our hour was come.

Moric's wit, however, now saved us, as his ready courage had done. He seemed to comprehend the whole in a moment; and, as his religion never stood in the way of his proceedings, he burst out in a loud laugh, as the men came up, crying, "That Maheutre of a Huguenot will need no more. By the mass, if I had not had my pistol he would have murdered some of us. There, drag him along by the heels to Montfaucon. So perish all enemies of the true Church!"

"Bravo! bravo!" cried the torchmen, completely deceived by these words, and taking us for zealous Catholics; "come on! come on!" and on we hurried after them as closely as we could. But the house of Martin Vern was far off. The streets were beginning to swarm with people; we saw two doors burst open, to pillage the houses and massacre the inhabitants, ere we reached the end of the street; the whole scene of that diabolical massacre was around us; and Louise could not keep up with the men, whose mistake might still have saved us if we could have gone on in their company. Nothing then but certain death seemed to present itself on every side; the only chance of safety was in putting Moric Endem at the head of our troop; but he was known to so many Catholics as well as Protestants, that the first order to unmask would have betrayed all.

As we were following the other party at some distance, five or six people came up from the opposite direction, and spoke a moment to those before us. There was a woman with these new-comers; but they stopped, and one man advanced, saying, "Unmask!"

Moric was about to cut him down, but I stopped him, and replied, "Unmask yourself."

"Ha!" cried the other, who proved to be young Martin Vern, "I was seeking you, Monsieur les Bois. We shall save you still. Miriam, link yourself with the lady—my men mingle with their men. Let none of

your party," he added, in a low tone, "unmask; we will do that if need should be. Now, shout, my men, and wave your torches. Up with the Catholic Church! Down with the Maheutres!"

"O my father! my father!" said Louise to me, in a low voice; "can we not save my father? O Henri! Henri! think of him!"

I spoke a word upon the subject to the young merchant; but he stopped me sharply ere I could finish my sentence. "I am risking my life by what I am doing even now. Speak not of it! He has a Catholic wife; she will save his house.—Come on! come on! You will see such sights as will make you glad of your own lives!"

I whispered to Louise the hope that he gave me, scanty as it was; and, alas! as we hastened onward, the sights we saw did fully justify that which the young merchant had said.

Before we had gone half a mile, the streets of Paris were one scene of massacre and horror. The whole place was blazing with torches; large parties of armed men on foot and on horseback were scouring the streets, killing every one even suspected of Protestantism; and many a Catholic, too, was slain in the anarchy of the time, who stood between fair estates and greedy relations. Six or seven we saw murdered before our eyes; and several times, while the echoing screams of new victims were heard within the houses, a dead body was cast forth from the upper windows into the streets as we were passing. Instantly a crowd of the dark and sallow villains that crowd the lanes and alleys of every great metropolis, gathered round, like vultures, over the corpse, to strip it of its clothing; and often was heard the low groan, or faint cry, which followed the dagger-stroke that ended what the assassins above had left unfinished.

As we approached the banks of the river, however, the scene became still more terrible, and still more con-

fused. Thousands of figures, all bent on the same bloody business, whirled round us in every direction; the cries of the victims, the shouts of their butchers, the breaking in of doors and windows, the occasional discharge of fire-arms, the incessant ringing of the bells, the beating of drums, and the sounding of trumpets, made a noise perfectly deafening; while the sights that were now presented as clearly as if it had been day, made the heart sick with horror and agony and indignant grief. In one gate-way alone, I saw piled up so many human bodies, amongst which were two women, that the gate could not be shut; and as I kept my eyes upon the ground, I saw that the gutters flowed red with blood. A little farther on, a boy of thirteen or fourteen years of age was seen dragging along a naked corpse by the heels; and, further still, a fiend of a woman appeared pressing out the last breath from the body of a creature like herself, while she tore the rich clothes from her dying limbs.

All those of a better class that appeared active in the massacre—at least, all I saw—were masked; but much happened even close to me that I beheld not at all; for my whole thoughts were taken up with the situation of the dear girl by my side, and I feared every moment that her strength would fail through terror, horror, and agitation. She hung heavily upon my arm, it is true, but still she did not give way. With her eyes bent down upon the ground, she hurried on, while the kind girl, Miriam, though evidently terribly agitated herself, poured strengthening and consoling words into her ear, and supported her on the other side.

Three times we were stopped and commanded to unmask; but either a single word from young Martin Vern or Moric Endem's well-imitated shout of "Down with the Huguenots!" obtained us a free passage without uncovering our faces.

At length the long-wished-for sight of the street in

which the merchant lived presented itself; but at that very spot we were stopped by a crowd of wild rabble whom no words would pacify; and even when the young merchant and two of those who were with him pulled off their vizards, a furious man, brandishing a sword, swore that he gave a false name, and was calling out to kill him, when Moric Endem started forward, exclaiming, "Ha! Gouquant! Huguenot! Maheutre that you are! Knock his brains out, Martin! Knock his brains out! He was Coligny's horse-boy at Moncontour, and was taken. Knock his brains out! knock his brains out! He is a Huguenot shamming Catholic!"

With his drawn sword in his hand Moric rushed forward, and before he could be stopped cut the man down. "By the mass there are more Huguenots amongst them," he cried, springing at another man. "Kill them all! kill them all! Down with the Huguenots!" but the men fled in every direction, and left the street clear.

"Young Martin Vern, however, paused and looked angrily upon Moric Endem, saying, "This must be answered."

"It is answered in six words," replied Moric. "The man is what I said. He is Gouquant, who was horse-boy to the Admiral, and has since, I hear, been cut-throat for any one that wanted one here in Paris."

Nobody could contradict him, and the young merchant hurried on.

Oh, with what joy and satisfaction did I see the great doors of the merchant's court-yard close behind us, and held my poor half-fainting Louise to my heart in a momentary dream of safety. But that dream was soon dispelled, for I heard one of the men, as pale as death, telling the good youth who had protected us, that the whole place had been twice searched for me and my followers already.

The next moment there was a low rap at the gate, and, on looking through the grating, we saw the two

elder merchants, with a foot-boy, and immediately gave them admission. Martin Vern's face was sad and pale, however.

"They refuse to open the city gates on any account," he said, as soon as the door was closed. "Nay, cheer up, sweet lady, we will find means to save you. Miriam, what says your quick wit? To-morrow the search will be stricter and more orderly,—not less fatal, though. How can we get them out of the city?"

"By the river!" said the girl, eagerly, "by the river! My father's barge that brought all the gold plate from Rouen, lies just at the back of our garden."

"But to get to the back of your house, Miriam," said the merchant, "they must pass round through that awful street where the blood is now flowing like water."

"Over the tops of the houses!" cried the girl; "over the roof! I know there is a way. You, dear Martin, run round and tell my father to open the door above. I will guide them thither."

The young merchant paused not a moment, and his uncle as eagerly and rapidly led us out upon the tops of their warehouses. Tremendous was the lurid glare that rose up from the streets below; tremendous the mingled roar of terrific sounds that reached us as we hurried along the narrow and giddy way. It was like walking along the precipice verge of hell itself; and I do not think that Louise could have borne it long had not good Martin Vern soon led us into a sort of alley between the double roofs of the houses.

It was with some difficulty that we found out which was the roof of the good Jew's house; but at length Miriam fixed upon it and knocked at a small door in the side. For several moments there was no answer, and she knocked again. Then, however, came the sound of steps hurrying up, and hands unsteady, it seemed, with age or fear, unlocked the door on the other side.

As soon as it was opened, the head of Solomon Ahar appeared, his limbs shaking, and his face pale.

"Blessed be God!" he cried. "Blessed be God! Come in, my children! come in! All is safe here. I always make my house doubly strong. Ah! bless your sweet face, lady, you look pale, and well you may; but the boat will save you; it is close to the shore, in the little creek I had made to unload my merchandise. I owe my life to the good lord, your lover, there!"

"My husband!" said Louise, in a tone that I shall never forget; and, casting herself upon my bosom, she wept. Her tears were soon dried, however, and we hurried down to the bank.

As it was probable that we might be fired upon, some large piles of fagots were given us to make a sort of screen on either side, and also to give the barge the appearance of a mere wood-boat. A large bag of money was placed in my hands by Martin Vern; Miriam brought down some rich cushions for Louise to lie upon; the Jew himself added wine and provisions, and Moric Endem, doing his best to assume the appearance of a common boatman, aided another of the men to push away from the shore and get into the middle of the river.

As we slowly made our way along, the horrid sounds from the centre of the town seemed to decrease; but just in passing near the walls the guards first called out to stop, and then fired upon us. But their shot did us no harm, and, ere they could load and fire again, we were out of reach. We passed the suburb, too, in safety; and, oh, how strange was the sensation, when we felt the boat gliding on through the calm, noiseless scenes of the country, and saw the tranquil morning light glowing warmly in the east.

According to the arrangements between the Baron and myself, our horses, and the rest of my followers, with good Dame Marguelette, had been stationed at a

little cabaret, not a hundred yards from the river, and Moric, who knew the spot, engaged to land us, and lead us thither at once. He was not one to mistake, and we put ourselves entirely under his guidance. When the boat touched the shore, however, I thought I heard many persons talking at a distance, and landed first to see.

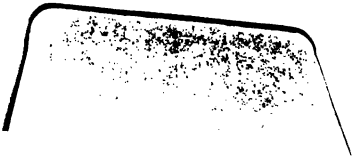
As I approached the rendezvous, I saw, by the grey light of dawn, a much larger body of horse than that which I expected; and, pausing, I was on the eve of returning to the barge, when I perceived a young man dismounted, and pacing eagerly backwards and forwards, but every now and then halting to look up the road. I thought that I could not be mistaken in the figure, and, as I advanced a little nearer, the face of the Prince Dauphin became more distinct. At the same moment, he caught a sight of me; and, darting forward, he grasped me by the hand, saying, "Thank God!—but oh, De Cerons, you are surely not alone!"

I told him briefly what had happened, and he replied, "Lose not a moment! Bring them all here. There is a litter for the lady, and an escort of my own men, with a safe-conduct from my father. But you must put twenty leagues between you and Paris, ere you sleep; for here, at this moment, no man could be certain of saving his own brother from hour to hour. No words, De Cerons, but away! To Geneva! to Geneva! if you would have safety."

No words, indeed, were spent in vain. Louise and the rest were brought up from the boat, and, ere twenty minutes had passed, we were on our road to Switzerland.

It was not till we had passed the French frontier, that I could believe the beloved being, who was now my own, was in safety. But my joy was soon mingled with deep grief; for at Geneva we learned, for the first time, the extent of our loss, and found that the Barony of Blanc-

ford, as well as the Lordship of Cerons, had fallen to one who wept to receive them. The Baron and his two sons had been massacred. Good La Tour, too, was amongst the gone; and the Baroness de Blancford herself had not been suffered, by the wild beasts that were let loose upon the Protestants of France, to escape that fate which she made no effort to avert from her husband.

THE END.

R. CLAY, PRINTER, BREAD STREET HILL.